

Mountain On Fire

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. The book of Exodus, Exodus chapter 19.

Exodus chapter 19. I want us to look at the second half of the chapter. But if we read again at verse 16.

Exodus 19 and verse 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.

Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. 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. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.

[1 : 1 7] And so on. I don't know about you, but at this time of year, I'm always finding myself quoting that rhyme I mentioned to the children.

Remember, remember the 5th of November. Gunpowder, treason, and plot. We see no reason why gunpowder treason should ever be forgot. Those words, they often, they always bring me back to my childhood of the fun of building and burning a bonfire.

But you know, building and burning a bonfire, it's something that dates back, as you know, and probably from history, you know that it dates back over 400 years. Because it was following the union of the crowns in 1603, under the reign of James I of England, and the 7th, or the 6th of Scotland, we became a united kingdom.

And we became a united kingdom with a Protestant monarch, which is why only two years later, on the 5th of November, 1605, there was a failed and a foiled gunpowder plot to blow up the houses of Parliament by a Roman, the Roman Catholic fanatic we now know as Guy Fawkes.

But in order to celebrate the safety of the head of Parliament, who is King James, or was King James, bonfires, as you know, they were lit throughout the country.

[2 : 4 0] And since then, for generations, bonfires have been lit, and children have been encouraged to remember, remember the 5th of November. And you know, we're familiar with what a bonfire looks like, and smells like, and sounds like.

We're familiar with the image of a large consuming fire and thick black smoke, probably not good for the environment, but we often see the thick black smoke rising into the night sky.

We're familiar with the noise of crackling wood, and the strong smell of burning. We're familiar with the blaze of a bonfire. But when we come to this chapter, there was nothing familiar about this bonfire.

Because as the Israelites approached Mount Sinai, they saw the mountain on fire. They saw the mountain on fire. But the mountain on fire, it wasn't a bonfire of garbage.

It was the all-consuming fire of God. It was the all-consuming fire of God. And you know, with the bonfire image and illustration in our minds, that's how I want us to consider this passage this morning.

[3 : 57] Because when the Israelites, when they approached Mount Sinai, they saw a mountain. They saw a mountain on fire. And that mountain on fire, it spoke to them of two things.

Meeting with God and mediation with God. Meeting with God and mediation with God. They are our two headings this morning.

First of all, meeting with God. Meeting with God. Look at verse 9. The Lord said to Moses, You know, have you ever thought about what it will be like to meet with God?

Have you ever thought about what it will be like to meet with God? Not what it would be like, or what it could be like, but what it will be like to meet with God.

As you know, there are many things in our lives that are uncertain. We're reminded of that so often. There's not a week that goes by where we are reminded that we do not know what a day nor an hour will bring in our lives.

[5 : 42] But my friend, there is one thing that's sure. And there is one thing that's certain. One day, we will all meet God.

Regardless of who we are. Regardless of where we're from. Regardless of what position we hold in life. Regardless of our income, our nationality, our gender, our religion, our sexuality.

One day, we will all meet God. Because as you know, God is our creator. But unlike the rest of the created world, God created us.

God created mankind. He created us both male and female. And He created us in His own image. And in His own likeness.

And He created us in such a way that we are distinct from the rest of creation. So distinct that He's given us dignity. He's given us dignity in life.

[6 : 44] And you know, the thing is, my friend. And God thinks so highly of the life that He has given to you. That one day, one day, He will ask you what you did with it.

One day, He will ask you what you did with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. One day, He will ask you what you did with His Word, the Bible.

One day, He will ask you what you did with His people, the church. You know, it's not a day we think about often enough. It's not a day I think about often enough.

But this passage reminds me, and it ought to remind you, that one day, we will all meet God. That's why our Bible calls us and commands us to prepare to meet your God.

Prepare to meet your God. Because our Bible reminds us and it reaffirms to us that it is appointed. It's in God's calendar. It is appointed unto man once to die.

[7 : 51] And after that, the judgment. The Bible reminds us and reaffirms to us, we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account.

And you know, we'll be thinking about this on Wednesday evening. I have to give an account for you on the day of judgment. That I have clearly presented to you the reality that you will stand before God on the last day.

Because you know, it will be at the last day, says the Bible, at the name of Jesus, that every knee will bow. And every knee in heaven will bow. Every knee on earth when Jesus comes will bow.

And every knee that's in hell today will bow. Every knee will bow. Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, the only way to be ready to meet with God is to repent and believe in the gospel. The only way to be prepared to meet your God is, as we were saying to the children, is to become a Christian.

[9 : 04] That's why when we were considering the first half of this chapter, last Lord's Day, we were asking the question, well, what is a Christian? What is a Christian? And as we saw and as we said, we said a Christian is camping.

Because they're only passing through this world. This world is not our home. We're only passing through. We also said that a Christian is called. They're called from darkness to light. A Christian is chosen and loved by God.

A Christian is committed to following Jesus Christ. What is a Christian? A Christian is someone who loves Jesus and looks to Jesus and listens to Jesus and learns from Jesus and leans upon Jesus.

A Christian, as we were saying to the children, because that's the level Jesus aims the gospel at, is the level of children. And he says to us clearly, believe in your heart and confess with your mouth and you will be saved.

Therefore, the only way to be ready is to repent and to believe in the gospel. The only way to be prepared to meet your God is by being a Christian. The only way to be ready, my friend, is to come like a child to Jesus, depending upon him for salvation.

[10 : 20] But you know the thing about the Israelites was that they weren't ready to meet their God. Maybe you're not ready this morning to meet your God.

But the Israelites, they weren't ready to meet their God, which is why the Lord said to Moses in verse 10, He says, go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow and let them wash their garments.

My friend, meeting with God, it requires preparation. It requires preparation. It requires, as it says there in verse 10, it requires consecration and cleansing.

It requires consecration and cleansing because God is holy. Something we don't think about often enough, God is holy.

Our holy God hates sin. In fact, God is so holy, this is what always amazes me, God is so holy that even the sinless seraphim in heaven were told in Isaiah 6 that they veil their faces from the power and the prominence and the presence of God's holiness.

[11 : 36] And they hide from the holiness of God and as they hide from the holiness of God, we're told that they cry. And what do they cry? Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty who was and is and is to come.

You know, my friend, God is holy. That's why meeting with God requires preparation. It requires consecration and cleansing.

Go to the people and consecrate them, Moses. Consecrate them today and tomorrow and let them wash their garments. So Moses, the servant of God, he was to preach to the people.

He was to tell the people, the congregation of the people, he said to them. He was to say to them, prepare to meet your God. Prepare to meet your God. And you know, is that not the role and responsibility of every servant of God?

Is that not the role and responsibility of every preacher of the gospel to call their congregation, to call their community, to prepare to meet with God?

[12 : 49] Because as we were saying to the children, you're meeting with God. It's an appointed meeting. It's a meeting you won't miss. I won't miss my meeting.

You won't miss your meeting. You might miss other meetings in life and other appointments. But I assure you, you will not miss this appointed meeting with God. And you know, I want to say this to you as lovingly as possible, out of a genuine care and concern for your soul.

Because you know, the thing about your meeting with God, you don't know the day that you are going to meet with God. You don't know the hour of your appointed meeting with God.

You don't know the moment of your meeting with God. You don't know even what's going to bring you to your meeting with God.

You don't know whether it will be old age or illness or accident that will be the means to summon you out of the scene of time and into the great, the great eternity.

[14 : 04] That's why the gospel is so important. That's why Jesus is so important. Because the gospel of Jesus Christ, it calls you, it commands you, it compels you to prepare to meet your God.

Prepare to meet your God. And you might be thinking to yourself, Myrtle, how? How? How can I be ready? How can I be made ready?

Because I'm not ready. Maybe this morning you're saying to yourself, Well, Myrtle, I'm not ready. If I was called tonight, I am not ready.

If I was summoned out of the scene of time today, I'm not ready. I'm not ready. I'm not ready. Myrtle, how can I be made ready to meet with God?

And my friend, Moses told the people, and in a similar way, I want to tell you, you need to be consecrated and cleansed.

[15 : 10] You need to be sanctified and set apart. You need to be washed in order to be welcomed into the presence of God. You need to come to the only person who can cleanse you from sin, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you know, I believe that this Old Testament passage is pointing us to Jesus. Every passage points us to Jesus. But what I love is that this Old Testament passage is pointing us directly to Jesus and the only way it's possible for us to be cleansed.

And I say that because how many times does this passage mention the third day? If you were to read through the chapter again, you'd see that this passage mentions the third day not once, not twice, not even three times, but four times.

Four times the third day is mentioned. And that third day should only point us to one place. The one place where meeting with God made it all possible.

And that one place is the empty tomb. The empty tomb. Because as you know, it was on the third day that Jesus was resurrected.

[16 : 28] It was on the third day that He rose triumphant over the grave. It was on the third day that Jesus proved that He had defeated death and conquered the grave and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

It was on the third day that even the angels of heaven, they declared to those who came to the empty tomb, they said, He is not here. He is risen.

But you know, what I think is just wonderful is that this passage points us to the third day and also the first day. There was cleansing on the first day, we're told, so that they could meet with God on the third day.

There was cleansing on the first day so they could meet with God on the third day. That's what we're told. Verse 10, it says, Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow.

It's day one, day two, first day, second day, and let them wash their garments 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.

[17 : 33] So there was cleansing on the first day so that they would meet with God on the third day. And is that not what the gospel reminds us? That there was cleansing at the cross of Jesus Christ on that first good Friday.

And it was also that we could meet with God on the third day. There was cleansing through the blood of Jesus Christ on the first good Friday so that we could be prepared to meet with God on that great day of resurrection, the third day.

And we're still meeting with God on that day. Because as you know, the third day was the Lord's day. The third day is today. The day Jesus rose from the grave.

Jesus rose on the Lord's day, the third day, the day of resurrection and renewal and restoration. My friend, Jesus rose on the third day so that we would be prepared for meeting with God because Jesus is our mediator with God.

Jesus rose on the third day so that we would be prepared for meeting with God because Jesus is our mediator with God. And that's what we see secondly. So we're seeing, first of all, meeting with God, then the mediator with God.

[18 : 54] The mediator with God. Now, look at verse 16. It says, 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.

Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. 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. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder Moses spoke and God answered him in thunder.

As we said, this time of year we're familiar with what a bonfire looks like and sounds like and smells like. We're familiar with the large consuming fire and the thick black smoke rising into the sky.

But when we come to this chapter, as we said, there's nothing familiar about this bonfire because as the Israelites approached Mount Sinai, they saw that Mount Sinai was a mountain on fire.

[20 : 02] But the mountain on fire, it wasn't garbage being burnt, it was the all-consuming fire of God. And you know, as we're told in the passage, it was terrifying.

It was terrifying for the people as they approached the foot of Mount Sinai. We're told that they were trembling. They were trembling. And as we read, it was the morning of the third day.

It was the morning and yet it was still dark. The morning light was being veiled by this thick cloud of black smoke. But there was also, we're told, thunder and lightning.

And we're familiar with thunder and lightning. We hear it from time to time. We're familiar with those loud and long rolls and roars of thunder. And then we're familiar with the flashes and the flickers of lightning that light up the sky.

But you know, every time I hear thunder and lightning, I'm reminded of what the Bible says about thunder and lightning. it's the voice of the Lord. And that's what we're singing about in Psalm 19 and Psalm 29, that thunder and lightning is the voice of the Lord.

[21 : 18] And it's the voice of the Lord because, as we said, the Lord speaks to us through His creation. He's speaking to us this morning through His creation. And through His creation, the Lord declares His glory.

He demonstrates His power and He reminds us and reaffirms to us His presence among us. And that's what's happening here. The Lord is declaring His glory with the thunder and lightning.

He's demonstrating His power and His presence in the midst of the people. And the people are terrified. They're trembling with the thunder.

They're trembling at the sight of the lightning. They're trembling because of the loud trumpet blasts. In his commentary, the late John L. Mackay wrote, he said, the whole spectacle left the people physically shaking.

The whole spectacle left the people physically shaking. They were terrified of the holiness of God.

[22 : 25] But there's more because we're told that Mount Sinai was covered with cloud, which wasn't something new. The Lord promised His people right at the Exodus that His presence would go with them every step of the way.

He would go with them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. But here at Mount Sinai things were different. We're told that the mountain was not only covered with cloud, it was also shrouded in smoke.

Look at verse 18. It says, 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.

Do you see that there at the end of the verse? It's not only the people who trembled at the presence of God. The whole mountain trembled at the presence of God.

The mountain was shrouded in smoke like the smoke of a kiln, thick black smoke. And it was shrouded in smoke in order to hide and to veil the holiness of God from the sight of the people.

[23 : 41] Because as the Bible reminds us, no one can look upon God and live. No one can look upon God and live. You know, it's no wonder the mountain trembled and the people were terrified at the power and the presence of God.

But you know, this trembling and this terrifying scene and spectacle of God's power and presence among the nation of Israel, it had such an impact that it was never forgotten.

It was never forgotten. And I say that because the prophet Isaiah, who lived in a day and generation hundreds of years later, he lived in a day and generation where the people of his day, they were ignorant and they were indifferent to the power and the presence of God.

And yet, you find Isaiah the prophet praying. He prayed that the Israelites would, that they would see the power and presence of God again.

He prayed that the Israelites who had encountered and experienced this power and presence of God at Mount Sinai, he prayed that the nation would meet with God and see God again.

[25 : 00] And Isaiah prayed that the people of his nation would tremble, that they would be in many ways terrified at the power and the presence of God. Isaiah prayed that his nation would be brought to their knees.

Isaiah the prophet prayed that the people of his nation would sense and see the glory of God. And you know what a prayer it was. You go to Isaiah chapter 64 and you have Isaiah's prayer for his nation.

What does he say? Oh, that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, and that the nations may tremble at thy presence.

I love those words. Oh, that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, and that the nations may tremble at thy presence.

That's what the Israelites saw here. The mountain was trembling. The nation was trembling. That's what Isaiah prayed for, for his day and generation.

[26 : 17] And is that not what we ought to pray for in our day and generation? Because as you know, we live in a day and generation where there are so many people, so many people who are ignorant of the gospel, they're indifferent to the power and presence of God.

So many unconverted friends who need to wake up to the reality. And many of them have gone to church all their life. They need to wake up to the reality and the finality of when they will meet with God.

My friend, we need to pray like Isaiah the prophet that our nation would tremble and in many ways be terrified at the power and presence of God that would bring them, bring us to our knees.

We need to pray like Isaiah the prophet that our nation would sense and even see the glory of God and the person of Jesus Christ we need to pray like Isaiah the prophet prayed.

We need to pray for our communities and our countries, our governments and our guardians, our lawmakers and our leaders, our terrorists and our tyrants. We need to pray like Isaiah the prophet prayed and say, Lord, that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence and that the nations will tremble at thy presence, that we would all be humbled before our great God in time, before we are made to humble before him in eternity.

[27 : 52] Oh, that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down. the time has gone, but just in conclusion, when the people had a meeting with God, they needed a mediator.

They needed someone to mediate between this holy God and a sinful people. They needed someone to stand in the gap between them. They needed someone to be their mediator, to be their intermediary.

And as we see from the passage, Moses was appointed as the mediator. He's going back and forth between God and the people. But the amazing thing about this passage, as it was with the third day, this passage is foreshadowing the greater mediator.

This passage is foreshadowing and pointing us forward to the only true mediator between God and mankind, Jesus Christ.

because as we said, the only way to be prepared to meet your God is by being a Christian. The only way to be ready is to repent and believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[29 : 05] The only way to be ready is to believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus is the only Savior of sinners and Lord over your life. My friend, the passage here is reminding us all, prepare to meet your God.

Prepare to meet your God. And for meeting with God, you need a mediator. You need someone to stand on your behalf. You need someone to stand on your behalf.

Because if you stand alone, you have no hope. But in Christ, you have a great hope. A sure and steadfast hope.

That's why the Bible claims and confirms there is one God. There is one mediator between God and man.

The man, Christ Jesus. You know, we need Jesus to be our mediator. To mediate on our behalf.

[30 : 12] You need Jesus to stand in the gap between holy God and sinful humanity. You need Jesus to stand on your side. My friend, you need Jesus.

That's not the first time you've heard this. But you need Jesus. You need Jesus in order to prepare to meet your God.

Oh, my friend, please make sure you're ready. Because the day is appointed. He has appointed it. So make sure you're ready by having Jesus in your heart.

Having Him as your Savior, your Lord, and your friend. Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for speaking this morning.

And we pray that as Thou hast spoken, that we would all hear that our soul would live. O Lord, we ask that Thy word would not return empty, but it would accomplish in the thing whereto Thou descended.

[31 : 26] And Lord, our prayer is that we would all be ready, that we might look into each other's eyes and ask one another, are you ready? Are you ready to meet your God?

And Lord, we pray that we would all have Jesus, because to have Jesus is everything. To live without Him is to have nothing. O Father, hear us, be merciful to us, rend the heavens and come down, that this nation of ours might tremble at Thy presence.

O Lord, do us good and we pray, go before us, bless our fellowship in the hall with tea and coffee, help us, Lord, we pray, to remember what Thy word is saying, to reflect upon it, and to know that we have met here this morning with a great God and a great King.

Do us good and we pray, go before us, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing the words of Psalm 98.

Psalm 98 in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 98 in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 98 in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 98, we're singing from verse 4 down to the end of the Psalm.

[32 : 50] So page 360 in the Blue Psalm book. Psalm 98 at verse 4. Let all the earth unto the Lord send forth a joyful noise. Lift up your voice aloud to Him, sing praises and rejoice.

With harp, with harp, and voice of psalms unto Jehovah sing. With trumpets, cornets, gladly sound before the Lord, the King. Then the last verse, it says, before the Lord, because He comes to judge the earth, comes He.

He'll judge the world with righteousness, His folk with equity. We'll sing these verses of Psalm 98. We'll stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise.

Let all the earth unto the Lord send forth a joyful noise.

Lift up your voice aloud to Him, sing praises and rejoice.

[34 : 04] With harp, with harp, and voice of psalms, unto Jehovah sing.

With trumpets, cornets, gladly sound, before the Lord, the King.

Let seas and all their fullness roar, the world and dwellers there.

Let floods come out, and let the hills together joy declare.

Before the Lord, because He comes to judge the earth, He'll judge the world with righteousness, His hope with equity.

[35 : 42] Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore.

Amen.