

## Voice of God

HN 26/06/05 pm

Reading: Deuteronomy 5, Hebrews 12:18f

Study Text: Deuteronomy 5:22-33

Sing Psalms: 112:1-4, 112:5-8, 128, 72:17-19

When the sun stopped shining in the middle of the day it was a very strange sensation. Years ago we experienced an eclipse of the sun. As the light from the sun was blocked by the moon, a strange twilight descended. We noticed all the birds flying into the trees to take up their nightly roosting places. Even some people act strangely with this phenomenon!

Thick darkness or complete darkness descended upon the people of God as they were assembled at the foot of Mt Sinai. Along with the darkness was a fire on the mountain. And in the midst of these strange phenomena, a voice was heard – a voice articulating words. It was the voice of God.

### Awesome spectacle

‘Our God is an awesome God’ are the words of song many love to sing. Do we appreciate how awesome God is? We speak of his transcendence, his ‘otherness’, his majesty, his power and dominion. The people at Mt Sinai witnessed something of the awesomeness of God as he came down upon that mountain. They also experienced his imminence, his close presence. He spoke to them.

God had previously spoken to Moses on this mountain. Moses saw a burning bush, a bush that was not consumed. His attention was drawn to this strange phenomena and God spoke to him from the bush. God had heard the cry of his people and he came down to deliver them from slavery. It was to these same people, now at this same mountain, that God again spoke.

In the darkness a burning torch appeared as the Lord made or cut a covenant with Abraham – the promise of descendants and of land (Genesis 15). In the darkness that descended upon Mt Sinai and with fire in the midst, the Lord made another covenant with his people. They were about to enter the land promised to Abraham. This Mosaic covenant included the Decalogue, the law given by God to direct his people in how they must live in his land as his chosen people.

The new covenant made at the Cross was also accompanied by awesome heavenly phenomena. There was darkness over the land from noon for three hours (Luke 23:44). The whole crowd who saw the sight beat their breasts and went away. The massive curtain of the temple was torn in two. This new covenant in the blood of Jesus Christ is for the forgiveness of sins – *their sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more* (Hebrews 8:12).

Our God is an awesome God. He dwells in unapproachable light. He is the God whom *no man has seen nor can see, the God to whom belongs all honour and everlasting power* (I Timothy 6:16). Yet in his mercy he sent his son into this world. Jesus did mighty works, miraculous signs,

as a witness to his divinity. He stilled the storm, he healed the sick, he raised the dead that people might know that the kingdom of God had come, that God has come to dwell among his people – *the word became flesh and dwelt among us*.

Many were amazed at these signs and marvelled. *They were filled with fear saying we have seen strange things today; and God has visited his people* (Luke 5:26, 7:16). This is the appropriate response to the revelation of Gods almighty and sovereign power. The Pharisees and others, as we know, rejected such divine revelation. They sought to explain the signs in other ways. They came under the curse of God – woe to you blind guides who win a man to *make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves* (Mat 23:15).

We must be alert to God ruling over his creation even today. God can suspend the laws that he put in place to govern the universe. One day soon he will intervene in a mighty way. *The heavens will pass away with a great noise, the elements will melt in the fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up* (II Peter 3:10). The consuming fire will come.

At that time it will be too late to turn and praise the Lord. Now is the day when you must seek the kingdom that cannot be shaken, the kingdom of God and his son, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:28). The people at Sinai feared they would be consumed by the great fire from heaven. (5:25). Let us humbly worship God; let us worship him *with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire* (Hebrews 12:29).

## **Voice of God**

The people were filled with awe and with fear when they saw the glory and greatness of God displayed on the mountain (5:24). When they heard the voice of God they feared they would die. They feared the great fire would consume them. Even Moses trembled with fear (Hebrews 12:21). Yet they called on Moses to *go near and hear all that the Lord our God may say*(5:27), promising to hear and obey whatever the Lord said.

What God spoke to them was ‘words’, specifically the Decalogue. It seems that they heard all these words before they called upon Moses to mediate for them. *These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly in the mountain...with a loud voice and he added no more* (5:22). There was no mistaking what the Lord said for he spoke with a loud voice – like the sound of a trumpet we read elsewhere (Hebrews 12:19).

The sound of the trumpet like that of the bugle is piercing and carries for a long distance. How distinctive and unmistakable is the sound of the bugle playing ‘Reveille’, the call for the soldiers to arise and prepare for battle. There was no avoiding sound of the bugle or the trumpet. So there was no avoiding the voice of the Lord.

*He added no more*. God did not finish of with any etcetera. What he spoke was complete and final. The Pharisees should have taken more careful note of this little phrase – and so should many people today. And what’s more, God wrote these words on two tablets of stone. They were engraved by the finger of God, not to be added to or altered.

We must be alert to attempts to devalue these words of the Decalogue by ascribing them to some other source. Because of similarities between them and ancient law codes, like the code of Hammurabi (18<sup>th</sup> Century BC), some scholars postulate a human rather than divine source for these commands. But the text before us, the inspired word of God, tells us that **all** the assembly heard the voice of God and that God wrote these words not man.

We also note that these words were not found on buried plates as was the book of Mormon – supposedly discovered by Joseph Smith. They were not given to one man to write down as Mohammed is said to have been given the Qur’an. The Lord spoke to all the assembly from the midst of a mighty spectacle upon the mountain. The people trembled in fear, fear of death, as the Lord spoke to them.

## **Fear**

*Blessed is the man who fears the Lord and delights greatly in his commandments* (Psalm 112). Every believer must have godly fear in his heart. We hear little of such fear in preaching nowadays, but we read plenty about it in the Bible. When God speaks the earth shakes and the people are filled with fear. Fear the Lord and obey his commandments.

Godly fear is not like cowering before a tyrant. God is not malevolent or vindictive. It is not a fear that stops us from doing anything. Sometimes people in an office fear to do anything lest the boss be offended. The fear of God stimulates his people to activity, to walking in his ways (Psalm 128). *You shall not turn aside to the right or to the left* (5:32). God has spoken – he has given directions for life, for prolonging your days in the land. Walk in obedience to him and he will surely bless you.

The God we fear made a covenant with his people – a covenant of grace. He established a relationship with his people. ‘I will be your God and you shall be my people’. He promised to bless them while ever they walked in his ways. But in this covenant relationship it was not just that they obeyed to get the blessings.

Satan accused Job of such self-seeking obedience, but God knew that his obedience went much deeper (Job 1:10). Job feared God and God alone. He would not be reduced to fearing anyone or anything other than Almighty God. He worshipped because he feared God in this true Biblical sense – a fear and love mixed together. Jesus told us to pray ‘our Father in heaven’, a title that indicates both fear and love.

## **Mediator**

In fear they called upon Moses to mediate, to stand between them and God (5:5). The Lord approved (5:28). Moses became the mediator, the man through whom God spoke to his people. God gave him all the commandments, statues and judgments, and he conveyed them to the people. Moses taught them to observe these commands that all may go well with them in the land they were going in to possess.

Moses died before entering the land. He could no longer mediate for them. But God promised to raise up a prophet like Moses – *him you shall hear* (18:15). Who is that prophet? Who is the mediator who lives for ever? We have to turn to the New Testament where we find that Jesus Christ, the Son of God is the *only mediator between God and man* (I Timothy 2:5).

Our text anticipates this day of a new covenant in Christ Jesus. *Oh that they had such a heart that they would fear me and always keep my commandments* (5:29). Only in the new covenant in the blood of Jesus Christ would they receive a new heart, a heart cleansed of sin and a heart to obey God. Do you have such a heart?

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