

Being in Awe of God

God is a consuming fire, a holy and awesome presence. To know Him is to worship Him. The story of God descending on Mount Sinai in Exodus 19 and 20 is one of the most dramatic and revealing moments in all of Scripture, and it has everything to say about how we live, how we worship, and how we overcome sin.

What Happened at Mount Sinai?

God told Moses to prepare the people. In three days, He was coming down. Not in a whisper. Not in a dream. He was coming in fire, thunder, lightning, and smoke, in full view of the entire nation of Israel.

"Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly." - Exodus 19:18

The people trembled. The trumpet blast grew louder and louder. The mountain shook. And God spoke.

This was not a metaphor. This was a real event, and there is archaeological evidence that supports it. Boundaries were set around the mountain. Pillars were erected. The physical marks of that encounter are still there.

Why Did God Say "Don't Come Near"?

God warned Moses repeatedly: keep the people back. Do not let them break through to gaze at Him. The reason was not that God did not want them. The reason was that He is so holy, so powerful, so consuming, that approaching Him without proper preparation would be fatal.

Think about the sun. You cannot stare directly into it without damaging your eyes. Now consider the One who created the sun. God is not hazardous because He is cruel. He is hazardous because He is that awesome.

He told Moses to sanctify the people, to have them wash their clothes, to prepare themselves. Holiness is not optional when you approach a holy God.

What Does This Mean for Christians Today?

Here is where it gets personal. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, you and I have been given access to that same God. Not a lesser version of Him. The same God who shook the mountain and split the sky with fire.

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." - Hebrews 4:16

God has clothed us in the righteousness of His Son. That robe of righteousness is what allows us to stand in the presence of a holy God without being consumed. This is not something to take lightly or presume upon. You cannot approach God on your own terms. But through Jesus Christ, you can approach Him boldly, confidently, and personally.

Do not let that become routine. Do not let it become religious. When you pray, remember who you are talking to.

Why Were the People Afraid to Hear God's Voice?

After witnessing everything, the people pulled back. They said to Moses:

"You speak with us and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die." - Exodus 20:19

They were not wrong that His voice was powerful. They were wrong to run from it. They chose a man's voice over God's voice because hearing from God directly would have required change. It would have required surrender. It would have cost them something.

Religion is what happens when people want the idea of God without the reality of Him. They want a sermon about Him rather than an encounter with Him. But a sermon about God and a revelation from God are two very different things. One gives you nice thoughts. The other changes you.

How Does the Fear of God Actually Help You Stop Sinning?

Moses told the people something remarkable after they trembled and pulled back:

"Do not fear, for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." - Exodus 20:20

The fear of God is not meant to drive you away from Him. It is meant to keep you from sin. Here is why that works.

Sin is always about exalting something in creation above the Creator. Whatever you cannot resist, whatever overwhelms your will and pulls you away from God, that thing has become bigger to you than God Himself. The answer is not trying harder. The answer is getting a bigger revelation of who God is.

When you truly see Him, nothing in creation compares. Not money. Not pleasure. Not comfort. Not approval. Nothing. When He fills your vision, everything else fades.

What Does "You Shall Have No Other Gods" Really Mean?

God did not say "you should not" have other gods. He said "you shall not." That is a statement of what will be true for someone who has truly seen Him.

"You shall have no other gods before Me." - Exodus 20:3

This is not just a command. It is a declaration of what happens when someone walks in the reality of who God is. You will not worship anything else. Not because you are trying hard not to. But because you have seen Him, and nothing else even comes close.

The same is true for every commandment that follows. You will not murder. You will not commit adultery. You will not covet. These are not just rules to follow. They are the natural result of a life lived in awe of God.

What Happens When We Pull Away from God's Presence?

Moses went up the mountain and spent 40 days with God. While he was gone, the people who had witnessed the fire, the thunder, and the voice of God, built a golden calf and called it their God.

That is what happens when we stop keeping Him before us. We do not drift into nothing. We drift into idolatry. We fill the space with something from creation because we were made to worship. The question is always what we are worshipping.

The people chose the creation over the Creator. And they had seen the Creator with their own eyes. That is how powerful the pull of the world is when we are not actively keeping our eyes on Him.

What Does True Worship Actually Look Like?

Worship is not a song. Worship is a state of being in awe of God. It is being so overwhelmed by who He is that nothing else competes for your attention or your affection.

When people are genuinely stirred by the reality of God, worship is not something that needs to be prompted. It is the overflow of a heart that has encountered Him. Praise and worship is not meant to stir people up. It is the result of people who are already stirred.

The Word of God is one of the primary ways He speaks to us and stirs us. When you open your Bible and read it slowly, emphasizing each word, picturing Him speaking it directly to you, something shifts. It stops being a text and becomes a voice.

"By His stripes you were healed." - 1 Peter 2:24

That is not a confession to work yourself into believing. That is God speaking to you. He said it. It does not change. And when you get the revelation that He said it to you personally, you will stand on it no matter what your circumstances say.

Why Did God Come Down as a Baby if Mount Sinai Did Not Work?

When the fire and the thunder and the shaking mountain did not draw the people close, God took a different approach. He wrapped Himself in human flesh and came as a baby in a manger. One way or another, He was going to get close to us.

That is the heart of God. He is not trying to keep you at a distance. He is pursuing closeness with you. He wants to talk with you, walk with you, strengthen you, and transform you. He wants to be more real to you than your problems.

The same God who shook Mount Sinai now lives inside every believer through His Holy Spirit. He speaks in a still, small voice. Do not mistake that gentleness for smallness. He is the same God. He has simply chosen to come close.

Life Application

This week, make one intentional decision to draw near to God rather than pull back. That might mean opening your Bible slowly and reading a single verse as if God is speaking it directly to you. It might mean spending time in prayer where you remind yourself who you are actually talking to. It might mean fasting for a day and using that time to seek His presence.

The goal is not religious activity. The goal is a fresh encounter with the reality of who He is. When you get that, everything else falls into its proper place.

Ask yourself these questions as you go into the week:

- Is there anything in my life that has become bigger to me than God? What has been competing for my awe and attention?
- Am I settling for information about God, or am I actually seeking an encounter with Him?
- When I pray, am I truly aware of who I am speaking to? Or has prayer become routine and disconnected from the reality of His presence?
- Is there a promise in Scripture that I have been confessing without truly believing? What would it look like to receive it as God speaking directly to me?

God came down on Mount Sinai so that His people would know He was real. He came down in human flesh so that His people could know He was near. He lives inside you now so that you never have to face a single moment without Him. That is not a small thing. That is everything.

Quotes

1. God is holy beyond comprehension—His glory is overwhelming.
2. Never forget: every time you pray, you're speaking with the Almighty God.
3. The robe of Christ's righteousness enables us to stand in the consuming presence of God.
4. Every sin begins when the creation becomes greater to us than the Creator.
5. A fresh revelation of God's greatness breaks the power of every idol.
6. "You shall have no other gods before Me" is not merely a command—it is God's declaration of His people who stand in awe of Him.
7. God doesn't just demand exclusive worship; His greatness makes every rival fade away.
8. Holy living flows naturally from a heart captivated by the greatness of God.
9. True praise doesn't stir the people; stirred people can't help but praise.
10. The fear of God drives out the fear of man.
11. When you behold God's greatness, every earthly treasure loses its appeal.
12. Our hearts are stirred when faith opens our eyes to the reality of God's presence.
13. When Sinai couldn't bring us near, God came to us in a manger.

14. The God of heaven desires more than your obedience—He desires your fellowship.

15. Faith rests in what God has said until it becomes what you experience.

16. When you're consumed with the reality of God, the cravings of the flesh lose their grip.

17. The place others fear to enter is often where God reveals Himself most deeply.

18. Nothing is more deceptive than loving the world more than the One who created it.

Verses

1. Exodus 19:9

2. Exodus 19:10-11

3. Exodus 19:14-20

4. Exodus 19:21

5. Exodus 20:1-3

6. Exodus 20:4

7. Exodus 20:7

8. Exodus 20:8

9. Exodus 20:12

10. Exodus 20:13

11. Exodus 20:17

12. Exodus 20:18-19

13. Exodus 20:20

14. 1 Peter 2:24

Summary

God is not a distant concept. He is a consuming fire who is also pursuing closeness with you. At Mount Sinai, He descended in fire, thunder, and smoke so that an entire nation would know He was awesome. Through Jesus Christ, that same God has clothed believers in righteousness and opened the way to approach Him boldly. The fear of God is not meant to drive us away from Him. It is meant to keep us from sin by giving us a revelation so powerful that nothing in creation can compete. When He fills your vision, everything else fades. The same God who shook the mountain now lives inside every believer through His Holy Spirit.