

Moses' third meeting with God

• *Moses the supreme mediator for Israel – a 'type' of Jesus*

• *Washed clothes speak of a clean life*

• *A boundary*

• *Moses but not the people*

• *The covenant is a revelation of fearful holiness*

• *Moses returns to the people and passes on these instructions*

Moses reported the words of the people to Yahweh^{□1}. This is Moses' third meeting with God on Sinai^{□2}. The people are happy to be in relationship with God as their Master and King.

Now God appears to Moses in a thick cloud^{□1}. God's shining glory will be within the cloud, so as not to be seen. God will speak audibly from the lower slopes of Sinai and the people will be able to hear what God says. This will give them overwhelming evidence that Moses is the supreme mediator between God and Israel. They relate to God via Moses, and in no other way. They must put their trust in Moses in order to be in touch indirectly with God. Again this is 'parallel but distinct' when applied to Jesus. Moses is a 'type', a foreshadowing of Jesus. The Christian has Jesus alone as his or her mediator. We relate to God via Jesus, and in no other way. We must put our trust in Jesus in order to be in touch with God through Him.

Moses relays to God the people's answer^{□1}. God gives instructions^{□2}. The people must be spiritually prepared for a 'theophany' – a visible representation of God. The washed clothes speak of a clean life. Clothes are what we see when we look at another person. So clothing stands for the person's character and reputation as we look at him. (This is why we need to be 'clothed' with the righteousness of Jesus Christ.)

The people must not come too near the place where God is revealing himself to Moses. A boundary is to be marked out over which the people must not come^{□1}.

A semi-circular border must be made. Moses is allowed up the lower slopes of the mountain but the people are not! They must not have any physical contact at all with the lower slopes of the mountain. If they do the death penalty will follow.

These requirements let us know something of the nature of the covenant that is about to come into being. It is a revelation of fearful holiness. It has in it requirements that are to be kept, out of fear of punishment. From its earliest mention fear of punishment is involved in the law. The Mosaic covenant creates distance between man and God. It did not bring people near; it kept them away. There was however a point where they would be invited to go somewhat nearer to where God was revealing Himself on the lower slopes of Sinai. The lengthy trumpet blast would reveal the time for the move nearer to the place where God was speaking. '*When the trumpet sounds in a drawn-out signal, they shall come up to the mountain*'^{□1}.

Moses returns to the people and passes on these instructions. '*And Moses went down from the mountain to the people. He sanctified the people and they washed their clothes. And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day. Do not approach a woman"*'^{□1}. They wash their clothes – a ceremony that speaks of cleansing one's life^{□2}. They are to abstain from sexual pleasures^{□3}, not because they are wrong but because there are times in life when earthly pleasures must be left aside temporarily in order to concentrate on relating to God.

□1 19:8b
□2 19:8b-15

□1 19:9a

□1 19:9b
□2 19:10-11

□1 19:12-13a

□1 19:13b

□1 19:14-15
□2 19:14
□3 19:15

Some principles

1. *We note the fearful holiness of God*

Several principles stand out in the story at this point.

1. **We note the fearful holiness of God.** He cannot be seen. A thick cloud has to cover even His partial appearing. One look at the shining holiness of God would kill any sinful human being who seeks to approach God.

2. *The servants of God need authentication*

2. **The servants of God need authentication.** One reason why there is much display and ceremony in this story is so that the people may believe Moses^{□1}. Who is Moses that he should take this authoritative and unsurpassed role in governing Israel and its relationship to God. He needs heavenly authentication of some kind.

□1 19:9

3. *Relationship with God requires a Mediator*

3. **Relationship with God requires a Mediator.** God cannot be approached directly. His burning holiness makes Him in a sense unapproachable. Yet God wants to be approached and wants to have dealings with men and women. How can it be done? God's way is to appoint a Go-Between, a Mediator.

4. *Relationship with God requires preparation*

4. **Relationship with God requires preparation.** We shall do well when we seek to meet with God to prepare ourselves. Under the gospel it will not be clothes that have to be cleaned but character. The clothes were the symbol; character is the reality. If we regard sin in our hearts God will take no notice of us^{□1}. Sometimes even the ordinary joys of life must be left aside for a while in order that we might concentrate on God.

□1 Psalm 66:18

5. *There is much in this story that calls for contrast*

5. But of course **there is much in this story that calls not for comparison but for contrast.** Hebrews 12:18 was expounding by way of contrast more than by way of comparison, when it said: '*You have not come to a mountain that might be touched...*'. The message of Sinai was: come towards the mountain but do not come too close. The message of the blood of Jesus Christ is: come as close as you possibly can! Draw near with confidence^{□1}! When we read the law we must do some contrasting as well as some comparing. '*Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience...*'^{□2}.

□1 Heb 4:16

□2 Heb 10:22

• *We too are waiting for a trumpet-blast*

We too are waiting for a trumpet-blast. Again God will descend to meet us. 'The Lord himself will descend from heaven . . . with the trumpet of God'^{□1}. We wait for a trumpet blast, but when it comes we shall be taken as near as near can be, 'for ever with the Lord'^{□2}.

□1 1 Thess 4:16

□2 1 Thess 4:17



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