

Have you ever met God? Have you had a chance to sit down and talk to him face-to-face? Has the Almighty ever appeared to you in all his glory and splendor?

In our lesson, the Children of Israel meet God at Mt. Sinai, and God comes to them, and boy does he ever come. He comes in an unmistakable demonstration of power never before witnessed by any human. Moses does his best to describe the sights and sounds along with the people’s breath-taking reaction.

While it might seem impossible to duplicate what happened on Mt. Sinai; 1,500 years later, Peter, James and John have their breath taken away with another display - also on a mountain. This time Jesus reveals himself his godly glory on the Mt. of Transfiguration.

Let’s pick out one of Moses’ words - “Fear.” 1) We fear God's power. 2) We fear God's love. 3) This fear impacts our lives.

God’s people in Egypt had been praying for some kind of relief or rescue from their cruel slavery. The King of Egypt had ordered them to find their own raw materials to make bricks. The King had also ordered all the Hebrew baby boys killed as soon as they were born. He was afraid they’d soon outnumber his own people.

The Lord answered their prayers with a powerful response. First he sends Moses to deliver God’s people. Then he sends 10 plagues to force the King to let God’s people go.

Once free though, the King has second thoughts. He sends his army to bring back God’s people, which numbered over 2 million. The Lord provides another powerful display by parting the Red Sea to allow his people to safely cross, while drowning the King and his military under walls of water.

For the next three months God's people traveled toward Mt. Sinai and each day he continued to

display his power with manna and quail to eat, and water, sometimes from a rock, to drink.

Finally, they arrived at Mt. Sinai, and now Moses describes the real display of power: **There was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Mt. Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder**

They saw lightning flashing and thick dark clouds cover the mountain. They heard thunder and trumpets blasting. They smelled smoke billowing up like it’s coming from a huge furnace caused by the fire of the Lord’s presence. They felt the mountain shake.

The reaction of God’s people to what their overloaded senses experienced was understandable: **fear struck their hearts and their bodies trembled.** This display of power made them realize how puny and helpless they were in the presence of the Lord Almighty. Their sin made them feel unworthy to be in the presence of a holy God. They kept their distance.

How often are we struck by the power of God? We still see it! The recent blizzards, snow storms and sub-zero windchills in the Midwest, along with the flooding and mudslides on both the East and West Coasts. Do we call it the power of God or the forces of nature? A meteorologist can explain it, but it’s still the Lord who is in control of all things that happen in our world.

Natural disasters tend to terrify and cause people to tremble today, just like God's appearance caused those same responses in our lesson. God's power has that effect on our hearts because we see how small and weak we are. We fear God’s power. We stand in awe of it. We have the utmost respect for it. We keep our distance.

2) But, we also fear God's love. Our caring Creator doesn't want us to be terrified of him. In fact, Moses says to the Children of Israel: **"Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you."**

God's purpose for coming to them in this way - he was testing them. He wants them to fear, respect and be in awe of him. This respect and admiration of the Lord comes not just because of his unlimited power, but also because of his unbelievable love.

God descended on Mt. Sinai with fire. Fire does burn like God's anger when he punishes. But fire also purifies and making metals stronger. Moses uses the name "LORD" here. That name identifies him as the God of free and faithful love – the Savior-God! The God who forgives wickedness and who keeps no record of our mistakes.

Israel had experienced that love. Of all the nations, God chose them to be his own people. He freed them from their Egyptian taskmasters. He destroyed the Egyptian army. He provided food, water and protection for them on their journey to Mt. Sinai. He would continue to protect and provide for his people for the next 40 years until he finally brought them into the Promised Land – in spite of their deliberate disobedience and relentless whining.

You and I have also experienced the love that God has for each of us. Of all the people, God chose you to be his very own. God freed you from the damning accusations of your evil taskmaster – Satan. He destroyed hell's army. He provides you with way more than just food, water and protection.

Just as God sent Moses to lead his people to the land of promise, so God sent Jesus to lead you safely to the Promised Land of heaven – in spite of your deliberate disobedience and relentless whining.

When you realize all that your Lord has done for you in your life, you fear God's love! You can't help but respect him, admire him and follow him.

3) When something dramatic happens to us, it leaves an impression. It impacts our lives. Moses tells his people and us the reason for God unleashing his power and love here: **"Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."**

As people who have experienced God's pardoning grace, we don't want to keep on missing the mark of what God forbids or demands from us. When we see an area of our lives where we are damaging our relationship with Jesus, - that's called sin, we want to stop it and correct it. Maybe I'm selfish - always demanding my own way, or I'm not so good at sharing what God has given me.

We fear the God who says: **"Submit to one another out of love for him,"** and who **"loves a cheerful and generous giver."** Then, we'll look for opportunities to be unselfish in our daily walk with him.

Or, maybe I'm terrible at forgiving others who hurt me and I hold a grudge. I know that's not how God treats me. He doesn't keep track of my mistakes. He forgives me and lets go of them. My fear of God impacts my life. Out of respect for my Lord who daily forgives my sins; I'll strive to forgive those around me.

When I think of fearing God, I think of how I feared my father. I wasn't afraid of him. He was my dad. But I respected him so much that the last thing I ever wanted to do was disappoint him. Hearing him say that he was disappointed with me was more painful than any grounding or spanking.

The fear of God impacts your life. Your admiration for his power and love strongly influences you to follow him and obey his Word as a Christian. We'd never want to disappoint our God.