

Hymns: 7 God Will Take Care of You 11 How Great Thou Art

Psalm 68:1-8

In just a few hours, the 2014 Winter Olympics will come to a close. This year they were held in Sochi, Russia, located on the Black Sea near Georgia and across from Turkey. The alpine events took place in the Caucasus Mountain ski resort Rosa Khutor 51 miles north of Sochi. This location sits at a latitude similar to northern New England, Buffalo, NY, and Milwaukee, WI. The highest mountain of Rosa Khutor peaks at over 7500 feet – which is a bit higher than the highest peak east of the Mississippi at Mount Mitchell, North Carolina.

Today, we will climb another mountain, Mount Sinai, and witness the giving of the Law to Israel. The traditional location for Mount Sinai is now called Mount Catherine near the southern tip of the Sinai desert. Interestingly, this mountain is about the same height as Rosa Khutor, our Olympic site, or roughly 7500 feet, but being in a desert, the location is much farther south – about the same latitude as Cape Canaveral, Florida – and of course, much warmer than Russia.

### Review

We learned a few sessions back how the Lord freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. He drowned the Egyptian army in the Red Sea after His people had crossed over on dry land. The Israelites then journeyed two or three months to the foot of Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 19:1). There they were given the Law. They stayed there nearly a year (Numbers 10:11) before God then led them to the edge of the Promised Land.

Two times ago, we looked at Moses and the Israelites preparing to possess the Promised Land. They decided to use their own devices, rather than trust the Lord to do it for them. They sent spies into the land for 40 days. (We'll be seeing that number *forty* again today.) While they found very desirable land, they also encountered **giants**. They allowed their **fear** of giants to override any **faith** in God. Because of their unbelief, God banished them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until all adults (except two faithful ones) died.

Today, we're going to back up a year or so in time from the time of the spies and **just eleven days journey** (Deuteronomy 1:2) from Kadesh-barnea (by the Promised Land) to Mount Sinai to witness the monumental events that surrounded the giving of the law.

Exodus 19

*[1] In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.*

So here's our time marker. It's a couple of months after the Israelites left Egypt.

Then we're told the Israelites camped in the wilderness at the foot of Mount Sinai.

*[3] And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;*

The Lord is about to remind the Israelites of how He saved them.

[4] *Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how **I bare you on eagles' wings**, and brought you unto myself.*

[5] *Now therefore,*

*if ye will*

**obey my voice indeed, and  
keep my covenant,**

God makes His covenant contingent on the Israelites' obedience to it. This is what is called a bi-lateral covenant. It requires fulfillment by **both** parties for it to work. As we shall see, depending on God is not a problem, but depending on man to fulfill his end of the bargain is quite another. This is where the Covenant of the Law falls short.

*then ye shall be a*

*peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:*

[6] *And ye shall be unto me*

*a kingdom of priests, and  
an holy nation....*

Here we have God's **covenant promise** for the Israelites.

[7] *And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.*

Notice that Moses had to go back **down the mountain** to meet with his people.

He first **verbally** communicated God's covenant to them before the Lord asked them to obey it.

[8] *And all the people answered together, and said, **All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.***

The people made a solemn oath to the Lord. In these days when people routinely ignore their solemn oaths and covenants, this is a reminder that we need to be very careful with the oaths that we make to other people and especially to the Lord.

*And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.*

Clearly, Moses here is acting in the role of mediator between God and man. We are told that Jesus Christ is our mediator today (I Timothy 2:5). We will get into that in more detail next time.

[9] *And the LORD said unto Moses, **Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that***

Why?

*the people may **hear** when I speak with thee, and **believe** thee for ever...*

The Lord then gave Moses specific **actions** to have the Israelites do.

1. They needed to cleans and purify themselves for three days.
2. They *and their animals* needed to stay away from Mount Sinai or die.

This was serious stuff.

*[16] And it came to pass on the third day in the morning,*

With Easter coming up, I cannot help thinking of how the resurrection of Christ was on the morning of the third day. There may be a link here.

*that there were*

*thunders and  
lightnings, and  
a thick cloud upon the mount, and  
the voice of the trumpet exceeding[ly] loud; so that all the people that [were] in the camp  
trembled.*

This was a **spectacular** and fearful **display**. They had ample evidence that this was from God and that He meant business.

*[18] And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke,*

Why?

*because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and  
the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and  
the whole mount quaked greatly.*

This reminds me of when we lived in Titusville, Florida. We could watch across the river as huge rockets would climb slowly from the launchpad at Cape Canaveral. There would be smoke and fire and a deafening roar. Especially at night, it was quite a show! So if you can imagine a rocket launch video run in reverse, that's close to what was described here.

Add to that an earthquake. Who among you have felt an earthquake? On August 23, 2011 at 1:53 pm, a 5.8 magnitude earthquake rocked central Virginia near the town of Mineral. We were living less than 40 miles from the epicenter and out on the deck at the time. The sound was most similar to a washing machine spinning badly out of balance. The house shook so hard that it cracked the thick concrete basement floor. That earthquake was felt even in Cary. It caused widespread damage – including cracks in the Washington Monument. It's a very helpless feeling when the ground beneath you violently vibrates and moves.

This show should have gotten the attention of all of the Israelites. But there was still more.

[19] *And when the **voice of the trumpet sounded long**, and [became] louder and louder, Moses [spoke], and God answered him by a voice.*

[20] *And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the **top of the mount**: and the LORD called Moses up to **the top of the mount**; and Moses went up.*

Here we have Moses climbing Mount Sinai – remember this is almost a mile and a half elevation. When the Lord called, he obeyed. Then after he received the words from the Lord, Moses went down the mountain again and gave the Israelites the spoken word of the covenant.

Exodus 24

[3] *And Moses came and told the people **all** the words of the LORD, and **all** the judgments: and **all** the people answered with one voice, and said, **All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.***

This is the *second* time the Israelites vowed to obey the Law of the Lord.

[4] *And Moses **wrote** all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, ...*

And Moses built an altar and sacrificed oxen on it. He kept the blood.

[7] *And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, **All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.***

This is the *third time* the Israelites vowed to obey the Law of the Lord.

[8] *And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the **blood of the covenant**, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.*

Jesus Christ's death on the cross was also a blood covenant.

[12] *And the LORD said unto Moses, **Come up to me into the mount**, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.*

I don't know about you, but it's making me tired **just hearing** about Moses ascending and descending Mount Sinai. Here he goes again!

[15] *And **Moses went up into the mount**, and a cloud covered the mount.*

[16] *And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.*

[17] *And the sight of the glory of the LORD was **like devouring fire on the top of the mount** in the eyes of the children of Israel.*

[18] *And Moses went into the midst of the cloud,...*

Now, we will pick up our story in the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 9.

Deuteronomy 9

*[9] When I [that is, Moses] was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, even **the tables of the covenant** which the LORD made with you,*

*then I abode in the mount **forty days and forty nights**, I neither did eat bread nor drink water:*

Of course, a human cannot survive forty days without water. This had to be a miraculous event.

*[10] And the LORD delivered unto me two tables of stone **written with the finger of God**;*

Note, God Himself produced the writing on these tablets of stone.

*and on them was written according to all the words, which the LORD spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly.*

*[11] And it came to pass **at the end of forty days and forty nights**, that the LORD gave me the **two tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant**.*

*[12] And the LORD said unto me, Arise, get thee down quickly from hence;*

Why?

*for thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted themselves; they [have] quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have **made them a molten image**.*

From Exodus 32 we learn the details of this story. It tells us that the people gave up on Moses returning. They then decided to make their own gods rather than wait any longer for him.

How many people today are impatient with God's timing in their lives? Rather than rest in His goodness toward them and His daily provision, they strive to live this life in their own strength. They don't like what God says, and they don't trust Him. They would rather trust themselves and fashion their own god. Some trust in the government. Others in their career. Some trust in the stock market.

Interestingly, there's even a golden bull (made of bronze) just a few blocks from Wall Street. It was designed and placed there after the 1987 stock market crash. The point is, this molten image of a cow is nothing new or even strange although it is sad that men still bow their hearts to them.

The Israelites charged Aaron, their high priest, with making them a golden calf. Sadly, he followed their wishes, instructed them to bring him their gold, and made an idol for them. Then, Aaron pronounced the next day as a feast day. The Bible said in verse 6, "*the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.*"

*[13] Furthermore the LORD spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:*

*[14] Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they.*

*[15] So I turned and **came down from the mount**, and the mount burned with fire: and the two tables of the covenant were in my two hands.*

[16] And I looked, and, **behold**, ye had sinned against the LORD your God, and had made you a molten calf: ye had turned aside quickly out of the way which the LORD had commanded you.

[17] And I took the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and [broke] them before your eyes.

[18] And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, **forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.**

Moses interceded for the Israelites and for Aaron, and the Lord showed mercy in his judgment.

Deuteronomy 10

[1] At that time the LORD said unto me, Hew thee **two tables of stone like unto the first**, and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood.

[2] And **I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables** which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark.

[3] And I made an ark of shittim wood, and hewed two tables of stone like unto the first, and **went up into the mount**, having the two tables in mine hand.

[4] And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing,

Lest there be any doubt what was written on those tablets, He tells us explicitly (also Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13):

**the ten commandments**, which the LORD spake unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and the LORD gave them unto me.

[5] And I turned myself and came down from the mount, and **put the tables in the ark** which I had made; and there they be, as the LORD commanded me.

The Lord had Moses make a box into which to put His second set of commandments.

### Application

The first time I spoke to you over a year ago, I related how we could learn a lot about the Bible by walking through it's gardens. I've also mentioned there's a good Bible study found in looking at its trees. Another great set of events in the Bible happened on mountains.

- Noah and his family, redeemed by God, had their ark land on **Mount Ararat**.
- Nimrod attempted to build a way to heaven at Babel.
- Abraham took his only son Isaac (whom we spoke of last time) up **Mount Moriah** where he was to be sacrificed but ended up being redeemed.
- Moses (as we studied today) met God and received the Law from Him on **Mount Sinai**.
- Lamb of God was sacrificed for the sins of the world on **Mount Calvary**.
- Jesus ascended into heaven from the **Mount** of Olives.
- Jesus will descend in great glory to the **Mount** of Olives to set up His kingdom.

What mountains are you facing today? Moses was 80 years old and he climbed and descended Mount Sinai not once, not twice, but three times in obedience to God.

Life is not a straight, level road. God gives us mountains, but just as with Moses, he gives us the

strength to prevail against them and in the end, strengthen us. Will you face life's mountains before you with fear and despair? Will you create your own mountains in defiance of God as did Nimrod? Or will you see these, your challenges, as gifts from God to strengthen you and grow your faith? If you take His hand, He will guide you, empower you, and keep you from falling.

### **Benediction**

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 24-25).

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