

Deuteronomy 4:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.

Analysis

The Sinai theophany—'mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven'—reveals God's transcendent holiness and unapproachable glory. The triad 'darkness, clouds, and thick darkness' emphasizes divine mystery and hiddenness even in revelation. God reveals yet remains incomprehensible, known yet unknowable in fullness. This tension underlies Reformed epistemology—we know God truly through special revelation but not exhaustively. The fire signifies God's consuming holiness (Hebrews 12:29); the darkness, His inscrutability (1 Kings 8:12). This awesome display should have produced lasting fear and obedience.

Historical Context

Describes the Sinai theophany circa 1446 BC (Exodus 19:16-20, 24:15-18). The mountain was enveloped in smoke, fire, earthquake, and trumpet blasts. God descended on Sinai in fire while the people stood at a distance, trembling. Moses alone ascended into the thick darkness to receive the law on stone tablets. This terrifying display demonstrated that approaching the holy God requires mediation—anticipating Christ's superior mediation (Hebrews 12:18-24).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the Sinai theophany reveal both God's desire to communicate with humanity and His transcendent holiness?
2. What does the contrast between Sinai's terror and Mount Zion's grace (Hebrews 12:18-24) teach about approaching God through Christ?

Interlinear Text

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| וְקָרְבָּן | וְקָרְבָּן | וְקָרְבָּן | וְקָרְבָּן | וְקָרְבָּן |
| And ye came near | and stood | H8478 | and the mountain | and the mountain |
| H7126 | H5975 | | H2022 | H2022 |
| burned | with fire | H5704 | unto the midst | clouds |
| H1197 | H784 | | H3820 | H6051 |

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 5:23 (Darkness): And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders;