

Deuteronomy 5:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire,

Analysis

The dramatic description 'The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire' emphasizes the direct, personal nature of God's revelation at Sinai. 'Face to face' indicates intimate, unmistakable communication, while 'midst of the fire' shows God's holy transcendence. This paradox—intimate yet awesome, near yet holy—characterizes true encounter with God. Hebrews 12:18-29 contrasts this terrifying revelation with the grace believers receive through Christ.

Historical Context

Exodus 19-20 describes the theophany at Sinai: thunder, lightning, thick cloud, trumpet blast, and fire on the mountain. The people trembled and asked Moses to mediate (Exodus 20:18-19), unable to bear direct encounter with God's holiness. This established the pattern of priestly mediation fulfilled ultimately in Christ.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you balance awareness of God's holiness with confidence in His gracious accessibility through Christ?
2. What does 'face to face' relationship with God look like in your daily experience?

Interlinear Text

מִצְפָּנִים	מִצְפָּנִים	דִּבֶּר	יְהֹוָה	עַמְּךָ	בְּרֵאשִׁים	מִצְפָּנִים
to face	to face	talked	The LORD	H5973	in the mount	out of the midst
H6440	H6440	H1696	H3068		H2022	H8432

מִצְפָּנִים

of the fire

H784

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 19:9 (References Lord): And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.

Deuteronomy 4:36 (Parallel theme): Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire; and thou hearest his words out of the midst of the fire.

Deuteronomy 34:10 (References Lord): And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,

Deuteronomy 4:33 (Parallel theme): Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?

Exodus 33:11 (References Lord): And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

Numbers 12:8 (References Lord): With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

Numbers 14:14 (References Lord): And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD art among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

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