

Exodus 20:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

Analysis

And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

Israel requests mediation—'speak thou...let not God speak' (דְּבָרָא-אַתָּה...וְאַל-יְדַבֵּר) (dabber-attah ve'al-yedabber). They cannot endure direct divine speech; Moses must intermediate. This establishes mediation's necessity—people need a go-between to approach holy God. Moses mediates the old covenant; Christ the new (1 Timothy 2:5). The phrase 'lest we die' (וְלֹא תָמִת, velo namut) acknowledges their danger—God's voice kills unholy hearers. Deuteronomy 5:24-27 expands this: they rightly fear death from God's consuming glory. Hebrews contrasts Sinai's 'unbearable command' with Zion's gracious access (Hebrews 12:18-24). Christ endures God's wrath so we can hear God's voice without dying.

Historical Context

Israel's request for mediation pleased God (Deuteronomy 5:28)—they rightly assessed their need. The mediatorial principle structures all subsequent revelation—prophets, priests, finally Christ, the perfect Mediator.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Why is mediation necessary—why can't people approach God directly on their own terms?
2. How does Christ's mediation improve upon Moses' mediation (Hebrews 8:6, 9:15)?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	אֶל	מֹשֶׁה	יְהִי	רָאשׁ	עַפְתָּנוּ	אֶת	הַ	יְהִי	רָאשׁ	מֹשֶׁה	וַיֹּאמֶר
And they said	H413	unto Moses	H4872	Speak	H1696		H859		H5973		
	H559										
וְנַשְׁתַּת	עָה	וְאֶל	מֹשֶׁה	יְהִי	רָאשׁ	עַפְתָּנוּ	אֶת	הַ	יְהִי	רָאשׁ	וְנַשְׁתַּת
thou with us and we will hear	H408	Speak	H1696	but let not God	H430		H5973		H6435		
	H8085										
בְּמִותִ:											
with us lest we die	H4191										

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 18:16 (References God): According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

Acts 7:38 (Parallel theme): This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

Exodus 33:20 (Parallel theme): And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

Galatians 3:19 (Parallel theme): Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

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