

Week 3.

- How do you feel about stormy weather?
- Read Exodus 19:1-2, 10-20
- What preparations were the people to make before they met with God?
- Put yourself in the picture. Imagine yourself as one of the people standing at the foot of Mount Sinai as Moses spoke to God. How might you be feeling?
- God wanted to meet with the people but he also put boundaries in place (v 12). Why do you think he did that?

In the OT what is holy is untouchable by human hands (e.g. the Ark of the Covenant). Holiness is closely linked to justice & mercy. With the incarnation of Jesus, holiness is made tangible.

- How might you experience the holiness of God as you worship him?
 - Every encounter with the Divine should lead to personal transformation. Do you agree?
- Holiness, in its rawest form is difficult for us to comprehend. We often think of holiness in terms of morality, but it is much more than that.*
- How would you define holiness? Does it affect the way in which you worship God? How?
 - Think about hymns and songs you know that mention God's holiness and begin to build a picture of what holiness might look like. A few are mentioned below to start you off!
 - Before you close in prayer, you might like to listen to one of the hymns / songs you've thought about already.

**[Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty;
Be Still for the Presence of the Lord ;
When I Look into your Holiness ;
O Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness
Silent Night, Holy Night]**



I Am Who Am

Moses - Friend of God

Thunder, Lightning & Darkness

The primal imagination links thunder with the presence, power and wrath of deity.

Sometimes thunder is simply one of the forces of nature controlled by God. Sometimes such divine control over thunder expands into the storm God motif, in which the focus is not so much a literal storm as a symbolic use of natural forces to picture the power of God.

A second cluster of images make thunder a symbol for the transcendent power of God (such as in our reading).

The image of thunder in the Bible is based on a paradox: it is a force of nature that consistently images forth something beyond nature, namely, the presence, power and judgment of deity, evoking primarily awe and dread.

The association of fire and God is so close that Scripture takes pains to distinguish them. Lightning is fire on a supernatural scale with a supernatural purpose. It represents one of our great primordial fears. Its grandeur and awe reduce us to frightened children, acutely aware of our powerlessness and insignificance. To observe the activity of lightning, especially in antiquity, was to witness the direct involvement and response of the Creator to creation - a Creator in control of nature that seems at the same time paradoxically out of control. Lightning symbolises at once both the untameable power and unapproachable presence of God.

Scripture uses lightning as proof of God's terrifying presence. It frightens believer and non-believer alike. Mount Sinai flashes and smoulders as evidence of God's occupancy.

God's power over darkness is evident in the fact that he uses it to achieve his purposes. He uses darkness to cover himself from human view. In OT theophanies the concealing or covering quality of darkness makes it part of the means of God's appearance. When God appears on Mt. Sinai, he is shrouded in awe-inspiring darkness. God is even said to "dwell in thick darkness", a transcendent spiritual being veiled from human view. On the premise that a mortal cannot see God and live, God's veiling of himself in darkness is an act of mercy toward the human race.

[IVP Dictionary of Biblical Imagery via Logos]

