

“Only a Voice”

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When God uttered His law from Mount Sinai He introduced it with these words: “I *am* the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Ex. 20:1–3). **By comparing these words with the same words given in a different order in Ps. 81:8-10, we see that they are a glorious promise of righteousness.** Studying more closely, we see that the statement, “I *am* the Lord your God,” **thundered forth from Sinai, was but the repetition of the everlasting covenant made with Abraham** more than four hundred years before. Thus: “I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you” (Gen. 17:7). Look at every statement of the new, the everlasting covenant, and you will find that its essential part is this, “I will be a God to you.” So the giving of the law upon Mount Sinai in such awful majesty was not to frighten the people with its terrors, as Moses assured them, but was a proclamation of the Gospel of peace in tones that should reach to the ends of the earth, so that all might hear and accept it.

Some time afterward, Moses, speaking of this occasion, and exhorting the children of Israel against departing from the Lord, said: “Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, especially concerning the day you stood before the Lord your God in Horeb, when the Lord said to me, “Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.’ Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness. And the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. **You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice.** So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone” (Deut. 4:9–13).

Come down now fifteen hundred years to the days of John the Baptist, and listen to his words when the scribes and Pharisees sent messengers from Jerusalem, to ask him who he was. To all their queries he had but the one reply, that he was “only a voice.” He was indeed, according to Christ’s own testimony, “he is Elijah who is to come” (Matt. 11:14); yet when asked if he was Elijah, he still replied that he was a voice. He was nobody; the only thing of importance was the voice. That was everything, because that

voice in the wilderness of Judea was the same voice that had sounded in the wilderness of Sinai so many centuries before.

This is the example for those who would proclaim the Gospel message. **The human is to be kept out of sight, that only the voice of God may be heard.** In harmony with this, Paul wrote, "We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord" (2 Cor. 4:5), and John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). **Not the man, but the message, must be made prominent. Human plans, human organizations, human agents, must all be hidden from view, that the Word of God alone may be heard and seen and felt, and may have all the glory.** All who proclaim the message, "Behold your God!" Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him" (Isa. 40:9, 10), have a most comforting assurance of Divine support and protection in so doing; for God says: "But I am the Lord your God, Who divided the sea whose waves roared— The Lord of hosts is His name. And I have put My words in your mouth; I have covered you with the shadow of My hand, that I may plant the heavens, lay the foundations of the earth, and say to Zion, "You are My people"" (Isa. 51:15, 16).

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