

Deuteronomy 5:22-27

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-5/deuteronomy-522-27/>

At Mount Sinai, all the heads of Israel's tribes urged Moses to serve as Israel's intercessor because they all were afraid when they heard God's voice and saw His glory being displayed in a blazing fire.

This section provides a narrative envelope to the Ten Commandments, as it develops and expands the thoughts of verses 1-5 that exhort Israel to obedience. These verses not only reinforce the importance of the Ten Commandments for Israel but also to remind Israel of the role of Moses as covenant mediator. In this section, Moses alludes to God's manifestation at Mount Sinai where He appeared to the people in a blazing fire ([Exodus 19-20](#)).

In verse 22, four different aspects of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) are spelled out. First, Moses referred to the Decalogue as the "words," (the same term he used in [Exodus 20:1](#)) saying, "These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly at the mountain." God spoke words that had meaning and could be understood and acted upon.

Second, Moses described the LORD as the divine source of the Decalogue when he said, "The LORD spoke to all your assembly at the mountain." The commands were not just Moses' ideas. They came directly from the mouth of God. That it was God is made clear from the signs God gave to make His presence clear, causing *fire, of both the cloud and of the thick gloom* to envelope the mountain. Moses reminded the people that they *heard the voice from the midst of the darkness while the mountain was burning with fire*. They heard God's *voice* with their own ears and saw the signs of God's awesome presence.

Third, Moses confirmed the authority of the LORD who gave the commandments when he declared that the LORD spoke *with a great voice*. Finally, Moses told the people that the covenant document the LORD initially gave them at Mount Sinai was final and permanent because the LORD *added no more* than what was contained on the *two tablets of stone*.

Now in verses 23-27, Moses proceeded to remind the Israelites of their frightening experience at Mount Sinai when the LORD was about to deliver

the Ten Commandments to them in a supernatural manifestation. At Mount Sinai, the LORD asked Moses to gather the people to Him so that they could hear His words in order to learn to fear Him ([Deuteronomy 4:10](#)). As the people of Israel assembled to hear the divine truths, they became afraid *when they heard the voice of the LORD from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire*. So, the people stood at a distance while *all the heads of their tribes and their elders came near to Moses* in order to urge him to serve as covenant mediator between God and His people.

The leaders of the people explained God's manifestation as the display of His glory and greatness to Israel. They said, "*Behold, the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire.*" That event caused them to confess: "*We have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives.*" But that supernatural event also inflicted in the leaders (as well as all the Israelites) the fear of death as they realized their mortality.

The elders asked, "*Now then why should we die?*" This question shows that the elders of Israel were concerned for their safety, not knowing how far mortal man could endure hearing God's voice. As they pointed out, "*For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, then we will die.*"

Their reasoning is that God had allowed a special grace for them to live, saying, "*For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?*" Therefore, they asked that Moses go on their behalf and translate what God had to say. Interestingly, they seemed to either have complete confidence in Moses' ability to stand in God's presence or did not particularly care so long as someone else was at risk.

Because of this unique experience, the elders of Israel commanded Moses to approach God closely to hear what God had to say while they all stood far away. The representatives of Israel stated, "*Go near and hear all that the LORD our God says; then speak to us all that the LORD our God speaks to you.*" God's manifestation at Mount Sinai displayed His glory and greatness to Israel, thus causing the elders of Israel to speak with a spirit of reverence and humility as they asked Moses to serve as their mediator. In his role as covenant mediator, Moses was asked to approach God to get the message from Him. Once Moses got the message from the LORD, He will relay it to all Israel, and they *will hear and do it*.

Biblical Text:

²² These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly at the mountain from the midst of the fire, *of* the cloud and *of* the thick gloom, with a great voice, and He added no more. He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me. ²³ And when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. ²⁴ You said, 'Behold, the Lord our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire; we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives. ²⁵ Now then why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any longer, then we will die. ²⁶ For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we *have*, and lived? ²⁷ Go near and hear all that the Lord our God says; then speak to us all that the Lord our God speaks to you, and we will hear and do *it*.