

The Joyful Sound

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God's Voice in Thunder

Psalm 24

³ The voice of the Lord is upon the earth; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is upon many waters.

⁴ The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

Jeremiah 10

¹³ When He utters His voice there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightnings for the rain, and brings forth the wind out of His treasures.

Job 37

² Hear attentively the noise of His voice, and the sound that goes out of His mouth.

³ He directs it under the whole heaven, and His lightning unto the ends of the earth.

⁴ After it a voice roars; He thunders with the voice of His excellency; He will not stay them when His voice is heard.

⁵ God thunders marvelously with His voice; great things does He which we cannot comprehend.

⁶ For He says to the snow, Be on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of His strength.

What a grand thing it would be if every child were taught this truth—this fact of science! If they were

taught whenever it thunders to recognize it as the voice of the Lord:

Exodus 34

⁶ ...the Lord God merciful all gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

⁷ Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...

...who speaks peace to His people, they would never cower in terror at the sound of it. There are many men and women who cannot hear the crashing thunder without fear, because they have not learned that it is the voice of God; and there are doubtless many more who would be still more terrified at its sound if they did know that it is God's own voice, because they do not know the Lord, and have not learned that He is love.

One day when Jesus was talking to a crowd of people He broke out into the prayer,

John 12

²⁸ Father, glorify Your name. Then there came a voice from heaven saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

Jesus understood these words perfectly, because He was thoroughly well acquainted with the voice and words of God; but the people who stood by said that it thundered. There were indeed some who said that an angel spoke to Him, but even they could not distinguish any articulate sounds. To the most it was only ordinary thunder, and that is really what it was; for ordinary thunder is the voice of God speaking words which our dull ears and minds have not learned to comprehend.

Job 26 [RV]

¹⁴ How small a whisper do we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?

God does not wish that we should be afraid of His voice. The “everlasting Gospel” of salvation is to be proclaimed “with a loud voice” (*Revelation* 14:6-7), and that speaks only comfort. Men are simply to take up the call of the Spirit and the bride, and say, “Come;” and the loud cry which they are to utter can be nothing but the resounding of the mighty voice with which God first speaks it, for He says,

Isaiah 51 [see also 2 Corinthians 5:18-20]

¹⁶ I have put My words in your mouth.

The Throne in Heaven

We are exhorted to...

Hebrews 4

¹⁶ ...come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

By the blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter into the holy place where God Himself dwells. *Hebrews* 10:16; *Isaiah* 57:15. We may come there as boldly as a little child to its mother, and we shall hear gracious words of life spoken to us, if we can but learn to recognize the loving voice of God in the thunder.

For “the God of glory thunders” (*Psalms* 29:3), and the throne of grace is the throne of glory (*Jeremiah* 14:21) where God gives grace “according to the riches of His glory.” *Ephesians* 3:16.

John, who was permitted to see into the holy place of God, says:

Revelation 4

⁵ Out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices; and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Revelation 5

⁶ In the midst of the throne [whence the thunders pro-

ceeded,] stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

So we see that the thunders come from the very place where the crucified and ascended Saviour sends forth the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

On the Cross

When Jesus hung on the cross “the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.” *Matthew 27:51*. There was God’s throne. The body of Jesus was the temple of God, and His heart was God’s throne. When He was slain, there came forth from that throne blood and water,—which is the Holy Spirit,

1 John 5

⁷ For there are three that bear record, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.

Calvary was the throne of the living God made visible to men; for the throne of God, as the cross of Calvary, contains the slain Lamb; and from that throne, as from Christ on the cross, comes the pure water of life—the Holy Spirit. Yet there are lightnings and thundering and voices from that throne of grace and mercy. What is that but an indication of the fact that God proclaims His grace in tones of thunder, so that none may fail to hear it, and all may know the greatness of His salvation?

Psalms 85

⁸ I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for He will speak peace unto His people.

But all have not been as willing to hear as was the psalmist. The Lord says to His people,

Isaiah 48

¹⁶ O that you had hearkened to My commandments! then had your peace been like a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.

Speaking the Law

So we learn that God speaks peace when He speaks His law, and that those who will hearken will find peace. That peace comes from Christ, by the power of His cross; for in the heart of Christ was the law of God (*Psalm 40:8*), and it flows out to us in His life.

Even so, the law is in the throne of God in heaven; for,

Psalm 89

¹⁴ Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of Your throne.

The ark of God in the most holy place of the tabernacle built by Moses was a type of the throne of God, because upon it, from between the cherubim, God appeared in glory, and spoke mercy to His people.

But within the ark, underneath the mercy seat, were the tables of the law, showing that righteousness, even the righteousness of the law, is the foundation of the throne. The law was there on dead stone, it is true, because that was only a picture, and not the reality; but it indicated the fact that in the real throne in heaven is the Lamb slain, the Living Stone,—in whose heart is the living law.

Psalm 68 [RV]

¹⁷ The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the sanctuary.

Mount Sinai was the sanctuary, the throne, of God, when “He descended upon it in fire,” and proclaimed His law.

Exodus 19

¹⁹ And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice.

Exodus 20

¹⁶ And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpets, and the mountain smoking.

Now when we remember that from this same mountain there was at that very hour living water flowing forth, flowing directly from Christ, the smitten Rock, we see that we have in Sinai the perfect picture of the throne of God in heaven. But that throne is “the throne of grace;” yes, and so was Sinai, because:

Romans 5

²⁰ The law entered that sin might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

So Sinai, Calvary, and Mount Zion all agree in one; all are the throne of God’s glorious grace, where God speaks righteousness and peace.

The People Were Afraid

When the people heard the voice of God as thunder, speaking His law, they said to Moses,

Exodus 20

¹⁹ Speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

²⁰ And Moses said unto the people, Fear not; for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that you sin not.

²¹ And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

What was the matter with the people? Ah,

- They didn’t know the joyful sound.
- They didn’t know that all the commandments of God are promises.
- They did not know that great as are the requirements of God’s law, so great is His grace to put the righteousness

of the law into and upon us.

- They did not know that God's mercy is as great as His judgments, and that though truth—the law of God, *Psalm 119:142*—goes before His face, mercy accompanies it. *Psalm 89:14*.

He had sworn to Abraham, that He would make him and his seed righteous, and this proclamation of the law was but the exhibition of the greatness of His sure promise.

Psalm 89

¹⁵ Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance.

¹⁶ In Your name shall they rejoice all the day, and in Your righteousness shall they be exalted.

Let us learn the joyful sound. Let us know that the thunders that come from Sinai, that are heard on Calvary, and that proceed from the throne of God in heaven, are but the assurances of His grace and mercy, and of the righteousness with which He will fill and refresh every soul that believes. Let us then come boldly to the throne of grace, not frightened by the thunders, but rejoicing in them as in the voice of a loving Father.

Shaking the Earth

There will come a time when God's voice will shake not only the earth, but also heaven:

Hebrews 12

²⁶ Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

That will be...

Isaiah 2

¹⁹ ...when God arises to shake terribly the earth.

At that time many will...

¹⁹ ...go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty...

Yet at the same time others will not fear even though the shaking earth be removed:

Psalm 46

¹ God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

But they will say:

Isaiah 25

⁹ Lo, this is the Lord, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.

And why?—Because they have learned to know the joyful sound of the thunder of God's power. That thunder which will shake the earth, and strike terror to the hearts of the wicked, will be but the voice of God repeating the covenant of peace to His people. Blessed sound! How fearful to think that any should flee from the God who speaks peace!

Would you be able to rejoice at the coming of the Lord when His thunders shake the earth? Then learn the joyful sound now. Say from the heart,

Psalm 85

⁸ I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people.

Yes; hear Him!

Isaiah 55

³ ...hear, and your soul shall live.

Listen to the voice of His law, and learn from it the joy of the Lord, the joy of His salvation.