

Russell Kelfer

When the Heavens Appear to be Silent

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10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

When the Heavens Appear to be Silent

There are times in the life of every Christian when the heavens appear to be silent; when the long nights of crying seem to be met with no response at all from God. When miracles seem to have ceased. When the thing you prayed would never happen looms on the horizon, and the more fervently you pray, the closer it seems to come.

These are the hours of God's deepest revelation to man. But in our agony, do we not often miss the tender word of faith He is speaking? This lesson deals with that issue. The title is "When the Heavens Appear To Be Silent." It is a message of hope from the Living Legend of Moses.

Our friend Moses has for some time now, been in the presence of His precious God atop Mount Sinai where God has been teaching him the essential elements of character that make up the building of life. These are ten principles by which we can see develop the mind of Christ. It is to those ten principles that we have addressed ourselves for the last eight lessons. Now Moses is ready again to descend from the holy presence of God to the task of communicating to men the reality he found on that mountain top. Here, too, you and I can find the deeper purpose of our time alone with God. Our quiet time is designed to change us and not to elevate us. It is rather to equip us to descend from the mountaintop and be a better servant to those who are searching for a word from God.

Jesus is our perfect example: He who, in essence, was God and who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, came down from the mountain of heaven with the message of God. God's own Son went directly from the presence of the Father to the grimy task of washing feet, feeding multitudes, healing the sick, preaching, teaching and ministering. Beloved, spend much time alone with God. That is our first calling. But never forget that as you descend from your mountaintop of fellowship, remember: you know Him better, the better to reveal Him to

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those who know Him not and to those who know not the Lord as they long to.

So Moses descends once again and God once again sends a message to the multitudes about who He is. We find that message in Exodus 20 where we take up our study of this incredible man of God. In verse 18 we read this:

And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.

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

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 ye sin not.

And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. (Exodus 20:18-21)

So God again opens the faucet of His power one-trillionth; just enough to release a tiny speck of His awesome might. The people who ought to be filled with delight to have a God of such power were frozen with fright. Here they make one of the most costly choices in the history of the nation. The choice was to elect to move back and view God from a distance, afar off. They petitioned Moses not to let God speak directly to them, for they were afraid of the consequences. They were willing to hear through Moses because that was safe enough. *“But let God not speak directly to us or we will die,”* they cried.

This sin is not only an Israeli excuse. The reason so little of God’s power is being released today in a world that is starving for power is that so many of God’s multitudes want to view Him afar off, at a safe distance through the lives of other people. That wasn’t God’s plan. Reiterated in verse 20, Moses said, *“Don’t be afraid, God has come to test you, that His fear may be before you and that you might sin not”*. God wants you to become vulnerable. God wants you to become available. God wants you to become teachable. He wants you to stand before His presence in awe of the glory of His presence, that it may make the tarnished, artificial glow of sin be seen for what it is. It is a test. Moses reminded them, *“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you”*. But their answer came in verse 21:

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

And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.

An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

(Exodus 20:21-26)

God had a special warning to His people as He called Moses to His presence. Once again it was as though He said this: "Moses, they won't come near enough to Me to get to know Me, so without a real relationship, they will be prone to fashion for themselves gods of silver and gold. Remember what I told you Moses, I cannot allow that to happen. If they make altars, they must be altars of earth to denote the frailty of man and the fact that God will come to earth where man is, because man cannot work his way to where God is. Moses, they can make altars of stone, for I am the Rock and the only immovable, unchangeable thing in their lives. But it must not be hewn rock lest they fashion again gods as though they could add anything to what The Rock has done. Neither let them build high places, altars with man-made steps leading up to a place of sacrifice, for nothing man can do can bring him closer to heaven. It is what God will do by coming down to earth that will bring man's salvation."

We need to mark these instructions well. Remember that God was going to test Israel to see if they were learning anything in Jehovah's Wilderness Academy. Remember, as well, that He always tests us on what He had just taught us. Remember that.

The next three and a half chapters of Exodus record God's

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detailed instructions to Moses on his next trip up the mountain. He had erected the pillars of life, now He began putting the bricks upon the walls and the building began to take shape. A wealth of principles are engraved in these chapters. Some of these principles are how to deal with employees, how to deal with crime, how to deal with property, how to deal with witchcraft, how to deal with deceptive business practices, how to deal with perjury, bribery, oppression, how to deal with the Sabbath, the feasts and the offerings. The last principle is the law of separation of being entangled with the enemies of God. Seminars on practical principles of living the Christian life are not new. God Himself held the first one to a crowd of one on top of a mountain. Now in chapter 24 Moses comes down and passes on to the nation everything God had told him. Their surface response was superlative.

And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.

And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD.

And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.

(Exodus 24:3-5,7)

What happened here was that Moses held the world's first revival meeting. It was held in the Sinai desert and he had 100% response. All the people answered with one voice, "Amen, brother, preach it." Then they had a worship service and sacrificed to the Lord. The word was read aloud for the first time and 100% responded: "We will be obedient. All the Lord said, we will do. Amen." It is a shame, but sometimes in the fervor of emotions, men will be drawn to mass displays of commitment they don't really understand. But the proof of that commitment comes when the pews are empty and you go back into that bad home situation or go face to face with that

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financial disaster or go back to that insensitive boss and have to face the reality of spiritual warfare on a day-to-day basis. It isn't hard to make a decision to be obedient. The hard part comes when the fire of testing is applied to your decision.

So the children of Israel, every last one of them, voted to walk with God no matter what. Now the Lord issues another invitation to His trusted servant, Moses.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.

And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God.

And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them.

And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount.

And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

(Exodus 24:12-18)

So God calls Moses back to the Sinai Seminary to receive now the engraved word, that he might teach it to his newly committed congregation. For six days, he waited for God's timing to be perfect as he prepared his heart to behold God's glory again. Then Moses, at God's invitation, enters again into the glory of His presence. This time he was to remain there for forty days and forty nights. He was to receive the law he had been given and detailed instructions concerning those things that would affect Israel's relationship with God.

Now we are going to skip chapters 25 through 31. These chapters detail the construction of the tabernacle, the furniture,

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the color, the materials, how to construct the ark of the covenant, the table of showbread, the seven golden candlesticks and the brazen altars. He was given commandments for the priesthood, an explanation of Aaron's garments, and the priest's garments. He was told how to make a sin offering, a peace offering, a consecration offering, the wave and the heave offerings. He was given specific laws pertaining to the Sabbath. God's curriculum was intense and detailed. It was all included in His Basic Institute in Israeli Behavior. We read this:

And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

(Exodus 31:18)

In other words, the meeting was over and God passed out the syllabus. It was the written word of God. Make no mistake about who wrote it. It was delivered by Moses but was written by the finger of God. So was the entire canon of Scripture that you hold in your hand as the Bible. It is God's word written by God's hand. It is all you will ever need to know God's will. Don't let anyone ever tell you otherwise.

Meanwhile, back in the valley, rested Aaron and his devoted company of Hebrews. These were the committed clan who ran forward at the recent revival meeting and made an unconditional decision to obey. You can all but hear them sing, "Wherever He Leads, I'll Go." I guess it is only safe to assume, then, that life had been one long month of prayer meetings, Bible studies and worship services. You wonder if the atmosphere is not so spiritual by now that three new Jehovah Bookstores have been opened, and an all night radio station has appeared playing sacred music around the clock. It is exciting just to think about all of the spiritual growth that must be going on down at the foot of the hill.

Fortunately, God didn't leave us wondering. By heavenly satellite we have an on-the-spot report of the spiritually alive Hebrew believers. You can catch it live on channel 32 of the Exodus Network.

And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot

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not what is become of him.

And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto me [Aaron].

And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD.

And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

(Exodus 32:1-6)

Our Sinai Saints, with no visible display of God's presence or power for a whole month, begin to doubt. Our on-the-spot reporter is asking one man on the street what is happening. Let's listen:

"Excuse me, sir, but we are doing an interview on Jewish religious habits. Your name, sir?"

"Freddie Fickle."

"Freddie, were you at the big revival meeting last month?" inquired the reporter.

"You mean that convention where that guy read us all of those rules?" answered Freddie.

"That guy? You mean Moses, don't you?" exclaimed the reporter.

"Oh, yeah, that was his name. He was a good preacher. But we don't know what happened to him. He just disappeared," replied Freddie.

"But according to EPA, the Eternal Press Association, we got a story that Jehovah, your God, called him up to that mountain for more instructions," added the reporter.

Freddie yawns into the camera, "Yeah, it was something

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like that. We don't know what became of him, but we have to get on with the program."

"The program? What program?" the reporter curiously asked.

"Oh, you know, we have asked Aaron to make us a golden calf to worship. We are going to have a big church picnic and we need an idol or two so that people can see the gods that brought us out of Egypt."

"Gods? I thought Jehovah did that," responded the reporter. "And didn't your God command you not to make any graven images?"

"Oh, that," Freddie answered. "You just can't take that stuff so literally. Anyway, God ought to be pleased, because we are doing this whole thing in His name. We are calling it a feast to the Lord. Isn't that nice? He is a God of love. He will understand. Anyway, I have to hurry because I am the head of the food committee, and I'm late to my meeting. See you around."

Our puzzled reporter scratches his head and says, "Well, that is our report on our religious unrest in Sinai. It seems that the heavens appear to be silent, and the results are catastrophic. I wonder what the Hebrew God and His friend Moses will think of this. Back to you, Walter."

So there you have it. The heavens were silent for forty-six whole days. These believers panicked. They went to the associate pastor and asked for a new program to get things moving again. Pastor Aaron knew better. He knew the ways of God. He knew the word of God. He knew that when the heavens appear to be silent that God is doing His greatest work of all. Aaron just yielded to pressure. He thought he had to keep the flock happy or else they would leave and go over to the Philistine Church where they have idols. Why not give the people what they want? Aaron decided that he would show them that he was not a narrow-minded legalist. He would make the calf himself. No one could accuse him of not being tolerant. Besides, he fashioned a mean calf. "I'll show Moses," he thought. "We can have a good time without him. We will major on more socials and leave those commandments until later. Those commandments just make people feel guilty and nervous anyway."

So Aaron led the troops into rebellion against the Word of

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God, all because the heavens were silent and no one knew what to do. My friend, the greatest mistakes you and I ever make in our Christian life usually occur when the heavens appear to be silent. When we have prayed and prayed for someone we love and nothing seems to be happening. When we have answered a call for some type of ministry and no door seems to open. When we have been stricken with disease and pain and the doctor shrugs his shoulders and says, "We have no cure." We cry out to God, but the pain simply increases. When we pray for a way out of our financial pressures and the water pipe breaks and the car stalls and a doctor bill comes and we hear nothing, or at least nothing that we want to hear. We pray for our children, but the rebellion goes on and on. "Nothing is happening!" we cry, "Jesus? We don't know what became of Him." We begin to fashion idols of resentment or bitterness and just assume that we overreacted to that "spiritual stuff".

My friends, when the heavens appear to be silent, it is because God is doing His most precious work. He is in the workshop of heaven building you a mansion. He is in the kitchen of heaven preparing you a feast. When the heavens are silent, you are in the midst of your greatest test and God is in the midst of His greatest work. Don't move. Don't press God for some meaningless show of power. Be still. His silence is a sign that He is seasoning a whole new helping of faith for you.

The children of Israel wanted more action. They wanted a new demonstration or display of power. They wanted another thunder and lightning show. They wanted Him to part another sea or strike another rock. They liked that. They wanted Him to rain down more quail so they could put their trust in a God of miracles. They were so wrong. That way you put your trust in the miracles of God, not in the God of miracles. There is a big difference.

When the heavens are silent, you have nothing to trust but God Himself. The road from Promiseville to Possession City so often leads through the desert of Silence where no trumpets laud His coming, no skies are filled with lightning announcing His presence. No rolls of thunder remind you as He clears His throat that He is still there. Only silence. Only faith. All you have are three ingredients: God, His Word and time. Forty days seemed like forty years to the irritated Israelites. They had bought tickets to a spiritual sideshow and they were tired of

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waiting for Act III to begin.

But God wanted His children to grow up. He still does. He says that when we were children we thought as a child, spoke as a child and understood as a child, impulsively, indecisively and foolishly. Now we have become men and women and we need to put away childish things. Children need new toys each day. Men need only to watch and pray. One of the childish things we need to put away is the notion that God has to entertain us with new revelations or miracles while we wait for His will to unfold. He said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So when the heavens are silent, God is saying, "Can you only trust Me for what I do? Can you not trust Me for who I am or for what I haven't done because it isn't time or it isn't right?" Are we like children who only gauge their parent's love by what they give them today rather than by who they are?

The reason for the silence may be so we can hear the quiet whisper of eternity as it steals through the recesses of our mind and only says, "I AM." We cry, "God when will this pain stop?" And He answers simply, "I AM." We cry, "God, when will my child be healed?" And He answers simply, "I AM." We cry, "God, when will you grant me that promise I have been clinging to?" And He gently and quietly answers, "I AM."

Philip, too, was perplexed in John 14:8. He wanted to see something tangible.

Philip said unto Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth [then we will be satisfied]."

In other words, "Show us a Jehovah demonstration and then we will keep trusting You."

Jesus answered and said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet thou hast not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?

Believeth thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?
(John 14:9,10a)

Philip was waiting for some grand revelation of the Father's presence and all the while he was walking alongside the greatest revelation of Himself God ever sent to man. While you are looking for a sign, you may be overlooking the Son. My friend, that is why occasionally the outward manifestations cease and

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God seems to put the phone on hold and every time you dial it simply says, "I AM, I AM, I AM." My friend, if we can't trust Him when the heavens are silent, the miracles have taught us nothing at all. So sometimes God allows unanswerable questions. He allows undiagnosable symptoms. He allows incurable problems. He allows unchangeable circumstances. As you shake your fist and cry your eyes out to God, it is as though the heavens were silent. But as the heavens appear to be silent, the angelic hosts wait in hushed adoration, as the Composer of the music of life writes the symphony which can only be played in your life to a backdrop of silence.

Faith is the evidence of things hoped for. What then develops more faith? Miracles or silence? Were not the greatest periods of silence God's most productive times? Moses tending Jethro's sheep in silence. Abraham expecting his promised child, but through all the years there was just silence. Oh, the silent period in history just before the birth of Christ when no prophet came, no word came. There was seemingly nothing but silence. Was not that silence but the quiet hush that fills an auditorium just before the curtain rises on the greatest performance in history?

My friend, the silence you sense in your life today may well be God's time of preparation for the greatest miracle you have ever experienced. It may be but the quiet unveiling in your heart of the miracle of faith. But do not do as the children of Israel did. Do not fashion for yourself a substitute plan and pretend it to be the will of God. Just remember: when the heavens are silent, your God is doing His greatest work. When the heavens are silent, God expects you to be patient.

Now let's switch to our remote camera on the top of Mount Sinai and let's get God's response to His impatient Israelites. Chapter 32:

And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:

They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

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And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:

Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. (Exodus 32:7-10)

We can't fully explore this passage in this lesson due to time. It is a message in and of itself. However, we must look at two elements: 1) how God tested Moses and 2) how Moses responded to the test. He is a Living Legend indeed.

God first tested Moses' tendency to self-pity by reminding him that these were Moses' people, the people he had brought out of Egypt. Then He tested Moses' tendency to anger by telling him the foolish things they had done. Then He tested his pride by casually suggesting, "Hey, Moses, I have a plan. Let's destroy them and We will build a whole kingdom of little Moseses. Won't that be great?" That is an attractive proposition to the flesh. But remember, God never attracts the flesh. The clincher is hidden in verse 10 where God says, "Let Me alone that My anger can boil and I will consume them and bless you." God says, "Here, Moses, you have the key to the thermostat and I will bind myself to your decision. You just say, 'Okay.' and I will destroy them. But I will give you the responsibility. You make the decision."

Now Moses caught the flow of it immediately. The very wording said, with no apologies, "This is a test." All Moses had to do was to bow his head and say nothing. "Just let me alone," God said, "and I will destroy them." But Moses loved his people more than he loved his position. With the heart of a grieving father, he responded and his response unfolds for us a perfect pattern for how to pray for those in rebellion. Let's continue,

And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to

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whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. (Exodus 32:11-14)

Here is a beautiful pattern of prayer for those who are in rebellion, especially those of our own flock, or our own children. A voice says somewhat sarcastically, “They are yours, you are responsible for how they are. If I get them out of the way, you will be in better shape than ever.” Here is the test for Moses. Here is his response.

Response 1- “Lord, why are You angry? These are Your people.” Moses places the brand of ownership where it belongs, in the hands of God. Only God has title to their lives. Give them back to God, and acknowledge that they are more His than yours.

Response 2- “Lord, Your reputation is at stake. God, I hear the same lie that Satan said in the wilderness that God just led us out here to slay us.” If God lets His own be destroyed, does not His reputation stand to be damaged more than ours? “You will play right into the enemy’s hand and the Egyptians will laugh and deride the holy One of Israel. These are your people, God, and this is Your reputation.”

Response 3- “Lord, we have Your promise.” Moses quotes Genesis 22:17 back to God. He stands on it like a rock amidst an earthquake of turmoil. “I have this promise, Lord, and You don’t ever break Your word. So on the basis that these are Your people and this is Your reputation and I have Your word as my guarantee, I do hereby exercise my God-given role as an intercessor. Lord, I will not let You alone that You may destroy them, even though their destruction may make it easier for me.” This was the answer God was waiting for. He turned away His wrath and turned back to Moses with the tablets of stone.

Don’t you wish you could pray like that? You can. Once you come to know the heart of God as Moses did, you can come to use the word of God to turn the heart of God and bless the children of God the way Moses did. That, Beloved, is intercession. Now usually when you cry out for God to be patient with someone, He will send that someone to you to test your patience. Try

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it to see if that isn't true. No sooner had Moses exercised his intercession to turn away God's anger than God put him to the test. Boy, did Moses get angry. We read,

And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.

And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

(Exodus 32:15,16)

And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.

(Exodus 32:19,20)

Moses somehow didn't grasp the intensity of their sin until he saw it. But now that he sees what has happened, in a show of righteous anger, he breaks the tablets of stone, stops the party, grinds up their idol and makes gold dust milkshakes for the whole lot. Then he turns to Aaron and asks, "What happened?" Aaron sheepishly replies, "They are just a mischievous people, Moses. I let them toss their earrings into this pot and out jumped a golden calf. It was a miracle." So much for Aaron's credibility. Moses then makes atonement for the people. He places his life on the line for theirs. God spares the nation, but sends judgment on 3,000 people for the sin that they had committed.

This is an amazing story, isn't it? It is about an amazing God and His amazing servant, a man named Moses. But is not the most amazing thing about this story the fact that it was all brought about by a discontented band of people who could not tolerate the silence of God?

Now some of you understand this lesson too well. Yours has been a life characterized by long periods when the heavens have been silent. Day after day. Month after month. Year after year. You have watched your faith grow and your character blossom. Your ministry has also multiplied as you waited patiently for the next word from God, only to awaken one morning to the

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amazing realization that the heavens haven't been silent at all. God's silence had been translated into God's character in your life. Lo, He had been speaking His greatest message of all.

However, if you are reading this message, and God has been speaking a word of faith to you, a word about that need in your life or that prayer in your life that seems to go unanswered, I would like to leave you with three simple instructions.

Instruction 1- Worship. Learn to focus on the God to whom your heart cries rather than on your cries themselves. Learn to worship Him for His word, what He said; for His worth, who He is; for His works, what He has done; and for His ways, the way His heart works. Take the book of Psalms and divide it into four books. Each time you extract a verse about one of those four things, write it in that book. Worship Him and the eyes of your heart will come to see a God so big that how He answers, or when He answers, won't matter at all.

Instruction 2- Work. Don't put the machinery of your life in neutral. Keep on being faithful in the details of life. Keep on doing what you know to do. Keep on sharing the faith you have, and it will grow.

Instruction 3- Wait. As you worship and as you work, leave the unresolved issues in the hand of a sovereign God. Don't produce any Ishmaels. Don't make any golden calves in the flesh. Don't assume for one minute that God's silence is your license to be god. If you have no answers from God in that area of your life, stand still in that area of your life and wait.

Worship. Work. Wait. And never ever forget that those seemingly endless nights when the heavens appear to be closed for repairs; when no visible sound has responded to your cries, God has been creating the most precious answer of all, your life. For when the heavens appear to be silent, God is quietly saying, "I AM the I AM and I AM becoming Myself in you."

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When the heavens appear to be silent,
And God seems not to answer at all;
When your cries in the night seem useless,
And God fails to heed your call;

When your prayers go unanswered,
And doubts and despair fill your heart;
When a hopelessness steals into your life
Saying: "God isn't doing His part",

Ah, blessed child, your God is at work.
Though ne'er can we see 'till it's past
That He, in the silence of Angelic hush,
Has carved out your message at last.

When the heavens appear to be silent,
You stand, child, on Holy sod;
And quietly, as you but rest in His love,
You find, then, the heart of God.

That's why the heavens are silent.
There is nothing your God cannot do.
And yet, He has chosen the better part
Of silently changing you!

When the Heavens Appear to be Silent

For Focus and Application

1- Why were the people afraid to spend time in the presence of God for themselves? Why did they prefer to have Moses spend time with Him and then instruct them? Is this still true today? Is it true in your life? Are you, for some reason, more willing to listen to others share what God has given them, than to take the time to spend the time with God yourself? Why?

2- Can you identify with the children of Israel in Exodus 24:3-7? They had experienced a wonderful time together. They had worshipped and heard the word of God. What an awesome experience. They all “came forward” to register decisions to follow Jehovah, no matter what. What was missing? Why did these “decisions” not hold up when the heat was on? Has this ever happened to you? What happened to the seed of the word before it took root in their hearts? Find a verse of Scripture that explains that.

3- Read Exodus 32:1-6 again. What do you think motivated them to disobey God so flagrantly? What part did Aaron play? What might have made the difference? What do you think was the key statement in that passage? Before you are too hard on them, consider the times in your life when you have made commitments, only to find yourself feeding at the devil’s table hours later.

4- See if you can come up with one statement that aptly describes what God is doing when the heavens are silent.

5- What was Phillip’s problem in John 14:8,9? What was Jesus’ response to his question? How does that answer apply to us?

6- Read carefully how Moses prayed in Exodus 32:11-14. What one word would you say typifies his attitude?

7- Have the heavens been silent in your life? Have you prayed and prayed and wept before God, yet no one seems to be listening? What is God trying to do? What is He waiting for you to do? Spend time this week thanking Him for the silence. Thank Him for what He is doing in you. Focus the eyes of your heart, not on what He is or isn’t doing, tangibly, but rather on *who He is*.

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10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778
www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer

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