Exodus Series

Sermon #22

Title:	MOSES WAS AFRAID
Text:	Exodus 3:6
Subject:	Reverence before Christ our God
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Tape #	Exodus #22

Introduction:

In the Book of Malachi, the Lord God asks, "Where is my fear?" (Mal. 1:6). That is the question I have for this religious generation. That is the question I want to ask the churches of this day, when I see all the tomfoolery that passes for worship in our day. That is the question I ask you tonight. — Where is the fear of God?

I know this. — No sinner has ever had Christ revealed to him and walked away the same as he was before. When Christ reveals himself to a person, something happens. The result of such a revelation is always pretty much the same. — The flesh always withers before Christ, when he is pleased to reveal himself in his saving glory and grace. We see this throughout the Scriptures.

- When the Lord God came seeking **Adam**, Adam hid himself and was afraid, because he was naked (Gen. 3:9-10).
- When the Lord revealed himself to **Abraham**, "Lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him" (Gen. 15:12).
- When the Lord appeared to **Israel** in the tabernacle, when "the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people, and there came a fire out from before the presence of the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering," the people should and fell on their faces (Lev. 9:22-24).

(Leviticus 9:22-24) "And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them, and came down from offering of the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and peace offerings. *(23)* And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people. *(24)* And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: *which* when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces."

- When the preincarnate Christ, the Angel of the Lord, appeared to **Manoah** and his wife, they "fell on their faces to the ground" (Jud. 13:20).
- When the Angel of the Lord appeared to **David** and the elders of Israel, they "*fell upon their faces*" (1 Chr. 21:16).
- That is what happened to **Isaiah**, when he saw the Lord (Isa. 6:1-6; John 12:37-41).

(Isaiah 6:1-6) "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. (2) Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. (3) And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory. (4) And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. (5) Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. (6) Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:"

(John 12:37-41) "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: *(38)* That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath

believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? (39) Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, (40) He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with *their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. (41) These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him."

- When **Ezekiel** saw Christ on his throne and the glory of the Lord appeared to him, and he heard the Savior's voice, he said, "*I fell upon my face*" (Ezek. 1:26-28).
- When the Lord showed himself to **Daniel**, he said, "there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength...And behold a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands" (Dan. 10:8-10).
- When the Lord Jesus was gloriously **transfigured before his disciples**, "they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid" (Matt. 17:6).
- When the Savior revealed himself to **John the Beloved**, the apostle said, "when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead" (Rev. 1:17).

BLESSED WITHERING

How blessed it is to fall at his feet as one who has been slain in his glorious presence! We are never so much alive as when we are dead at his feet. We are never so truly living as when our flesh withers in death before our great and glorious Savior. Every believer wants, more than anything else, the death of all that is sinful and rebellious in him.

Christ, who slays the flesh, will always raise and revive those he slays by the hand of his almighty grace, just as he did John. — "And he laid his right hand upon me" (v. 17). Life comes out of death. Revival comes out of withering. If you fall at his feet in the humiliation of broken hearted repentance, he will raise you up by his grace.

Christ revealed in the heart always brings a word of comfort and assurance to the one to whom he reveals himself. He says to those who fall before his glorious majesty, — "Fear not, I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:17-18).

That is exactly what we see in Exodus 3:1-10. The God of Glory (the Angel of the Lord, the preincarnate Christ) appeared to Moses in the burning bush (vv. 1-5). When he did, "*Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God*" (v. 6). Then, the Lord spoke a word of redemption, grace and salvation to his servant (vv. 7-10). Look at Exodus 3:6 with me. May God the Holy Spirit, now reveal Christ to us and fill our hearts with the fear of the Lord, as we behold him.

(Exodus 3:6) "Moreover he said, I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."

OUR GOD

The Lord Jesus revealed himself to Moses as the covenant-keeping God, the God of all grace. When he picked out Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and made them the fathers of his chosen people, it was not because of any excellence in them, but because of his free grace. His choice of those men, and the covenant made with them, was a matter of pure sovereignty and boundless grace. Now, he has come to redeem Israel from the land of bondage, not because of any good in them, or because of any good expected from them. Redemption, like the grace that inspired it is absolutely free.

The Lord God appeared to Moses, wrote A. W. Pink, "as the God of Abraham—the sovereign Elector; the God of Isaac—the almighty Quickener; the God of Jacob—the long-suffering One; who is about to bare

His arm, display His power and deliver His people." Blessed be his name, that is exactly how he comes to sinners in saving grace today!

- The God of Abraham is our God, the One who sovereignly chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.
- The God of Isaac is our God, the One who by his own miraculous power makes us new creatures in Christ.
- The God of Jacob is our God, the One who bears with us in infinite patience, who never forsakes us, and who has promised to perfect that which concerns us. (Ps. 138:8).

(Psalms 138:8) "The LORD will perfect *that which* concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, *endureth* for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands."

REVERENT FEAR

Tonight, I want us to focus our attention on the last sentence of verse 6. — "And Moses hid his face: for he was afraid to look upon God." When "Moses hid his face," he probably covered his face with his mantle. He concealed his face before the Angel of the Lord, concealed his face in the presence of Christ's manifest glory, because "he was afraid to look upon God."

What is the meaning of that word "afraid"? What does the Holy Spirit here teach us? In what sense was Moses "afraid to look upon God"?

The word "*afraid*," as we commonly use it, expresses the idea of that distressing emotion that comes from a sense of impending danger. It means "to shutter with terror, to quake and tremble with horror." Without question, there is a natural, slavish fear, a dreadful apprehension of God, that possesses all our fallen race. All men, because of guilt, shutter with terror before God. All, because of sin, quake and tremble with horror at the thought of God. They may not admit it; but their fear is inescapable.

But that is not the word that is used here. The word that is used here is a word that means to "revere". It would be better translated "fearful," or "reverent." This is the fear that God the Holy Spirit gives to all who are born again by his almighty grace. This is the fear of faith. That is the word here translated "*afraid*" is used throughout the Old Testament (Job 28:28; Ps. 19:9; 34:11; 111:10; Pro. 1:7; 2:4-5; 8:13; 9:10; 16:6; 23:17).

(Job 28:28) "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that *is* wisdom; and to depart from evil *is* understanding."

(Psalms 19:9) "The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether."

(Psalms 34:11) "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD."

(Psalms 111:10) "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do *his commandments:* his praise endureth for ever."

(Proverbs 1:7) "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction."

(Proverbs 2:1-9) "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; (2) So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; (3) Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; (4) If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; (5) Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. (6) For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. (7) He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler

to them that walk uprightly. (8) He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. (9) Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; *yea*, every good path."

(Proverbs 8:13) "The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate."

(Proverbs 9:10) "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding."

(Proverbs 16:6) "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD *men* depart from evil."

(Proverbs 23:17) "Let not thine heart envy sinners: but *be thou* in the fear of the LORD all the day long."

This is a fear not to be feared, but craved. Blessed is that sinner who learns the fear of the Lord with which Moses was overcome at the bush, when he hid his face because he was afraid to look upon God! — "Come ye, my children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD" (Ps. 34:11).

When the sinner is awakened from the sleep and death of sin, and brought forth into the light and life of grace in Christ, "*perfect love casteth out fear*." Therefore, we read in the Book of God, "Ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). It is a blessed thing to be freed from slavish fear, to be given that child-like fear that comes by the revelation of God's saving grace and glory in Christ. This is the sweet promise of the covenant (Jer. 32:40).

(Jeremiah 32:40) "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."

THE GOD WE FEAR

Now, let me show you why we fear and worship the Lord Jesus Christ our God and Savior. As we have seen already, the God who spoke to Moses here, the Angel of the Lord is our blessed Savior. In fact, in this 6th verse of Exodus 3, he calls himself God, using the plural name for the Triune God, (Eloheem), three times in this one verse. Three times, he says to Moses, "I am the God, the Triune God." — "And Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look upon (the) God (the Triune God)."

(Exodus 3:6) "Moreover he said, I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."

That God, the Triune God is seen and known, he is revealed only in the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate God (Col. 2:9).

(Colossians 2:9-10) "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. *(10)* And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."

We bow before Christ in reverent fear because he is the God of Glory (1 Tim. 6:13-17).

(1 Timothy 6:13-16) "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; (14) That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: (15) Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; (16) Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."

• He is the blessed and only Potentate (Psalm 41:13; Isaiah 40:12-31; Daniel 4:35).

The "only Potentate" is the Sovereign, the only Sovereign, the all-sovereign God of heaven and earth. Christ declares that he is that God, saying, — "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*" (Matthew 28:18). Christ as God is the only being in the universe who is blessed with the absolute right to do as he pleases.

(Psalms 41:13) "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen."

(Isaiah 40:12) "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?"

(Isaiah 40:31) "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint."

(Daniel 4:35) "And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

• Our Lord Jesus Christ alone is the "*King of kings and Lord of lords*." This title is expressly ascribed to him, and only to him (Deuteronomy 10:17; Psalm 136:3; Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

(Deuteronomy 10:17) "For the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward."

(Psalms 136:3) "O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever."

(Revelation 17:14) "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful."

(Revelation 19:16) "And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

• Only he who is God has immortality (Psalm 36:9; Isaiah 40:28; Daniel 4:34).

When the Spirit of God tells us that Christ is he "*Who only hath immortality*," he means for us to understand not only that he can never die, but also that he is life's never-failing Fountain (John 1:1-4).

(John 1:1-4) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) The same was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (4) In him was life; and the life was the light of men."

• Christ our Savior is that immortal God who dwells in unapproachable light, "light which no man can approach unto" (Psalm 104:2).

(Psalms 104:1-3) "Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. (2) Who coverest *thyself* with light as *with* a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: (3) Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind."

The glory of Christ is as unapproachable as the light of the sun. He is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person (Hebrews 1:3). Christ is the "Sun of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2). He is God, so glorious that none can even look upon him unless that person is veiled like Moses in Exodus 33:18-22, or he veils himself in human flesh. His glory is the glory of God (John 1:14).

(John 1:14) "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

• This Christ is our God, "*whom no man hath seen, nor can see*" (Exodus 33:20; Deuteronomy 4:12; John 1:18; 4:24).

(Exodus 33:20) "And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live."

(Deuteronomy 4:12) "And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only *ye heard* a voice."

(John 1:18) "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him.*"

(John 4:24) "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Because his divine essence is too glorious to be seen by the mortal eye, he assumed our nature, that he might be known by us (1 John 3:1-3).

(1 John 1:1-3) "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (2) (For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) (3) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

• To him alone, who is God our Savior, "be honor and everlasting power. Amen." To him be glory and dominion forever and ever, because he who is God our Savior is the eternal God, "which is, and which was, and which is to come...the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth," and he "loved us ad washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father" (Rev. 1:4-6).

We bow before our all-glorious Christ, hiding our faces with awe and reverence because he is God. **And we reverence him because of who we are**, recognizing that our only fitness to stand before him is his fitness, the fitness he gives us by his grace, his blood, his righteousness, and his beauty (Isa. 6:1-7; Ezek. 16:6-16; Col. 1:12).

(Isaiah 6:1-7) "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. (2) Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. (3) And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory. (4) And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. (5) Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. (6) Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: (7) And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

(Ezekiel 16:6-14) "And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. (7) I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare. (8) Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. (9) Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. (10) I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. (11) I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. (12) And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. (13) Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. (14) And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD."

(Colossians 1:12-14) "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: *(13)* Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: *(14)* In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins."

(Colossians 2:9-10) "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. *(10)* And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."

A MESSAGE GIVEN

Every sinner to whom Christ reveals himself receives a message him, a message to declare to others like himself, in need of mercy. It is the sweet and glorious message of redemption and grace. — "*I am come down to deliver*" (v. 8).

- By Blood!
- By Power!
- By Grace!

The message is always the same. It is from Christ and about Christ. All who receive it understand it. It is the message of a perfect Redeemer, perfect righteousness, a perfect Sacrifice, perfect grace, and perfect love (1 John 4:17-19).

(1 John 4:17-19) "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. *(18)* There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. *(19)* We love him, because he first loved us."

When Christ is revealed in the heart of a sinner, that sinner who once cringed in fear before God in terror, afraid of his wrath, is freed from such fear, and is delightfully overcome with fear of reverence, faith and love that bows before his throne in humble adoration.

We who have seen the Lord are his witnesses (Isa. 6:8; Acts 1:8). Let all who know him, young and old, men and women, go tell the world what a great and glorious Savior our Lord Jesus Christ is!

BE NOT AFRAID

Hear me, child of God. — "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Jos. 1:9). — Your Savior says, "Be not afraid, only believe" (Mark 5:36).

(Proverbs 3:25) "Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh."

(Isaiah 40:9-11) "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift *it* up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! (10) Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong *hand*, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him. (11) He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his bosom, *and* shall gently lead those that are with young."

If Christ is my God I have no reason to fear. I do not mean to suggest to you that I am free of fear. I am not. But my fear is my shame. I know that if Christ is my God I should be free of free. Obviously, I have no reason to fear...

- Satan.
- Men.
- The World.

And I have no reason to fear him! — "Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust and not be afraid." That is my desire.

- I want to trust Christ and not be afraid (John 3:14-16).
- Trusting Christ, I should not be afraid concerning all my past sins (Rom. 8:1; 1 John 1:9).
- Trusting Christ, I ought not be afraid even regarding my present corruption and sin (Rom. 4:8; 1 John 2:1-2).
- Trusting Christ, I should never be afraid of my future sins (Ps. 89:31-34).

(Psalms 89:31-34) "If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; (32) Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. (33) Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. (34) My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."

• Trusting Christ, I should never be afraid of anything that concerns the welfare of my immortal soul.

(John 14:1-3) "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. (2) In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also."

• Whatever my God may call me to do or to suffer for his name's sake, I ought to trust him and not be afraid.

He will supply all my needs (Matt. 6). He who supplied the children of Israel with 100,000 bushels of manna every day for 40 years, will have no trouble feeding me! He will protect me in all my ways. (Matt. 10:30). He will preserve me in his grace. And he will receive me into glory when I die.

This I know. — The more fully he makes himself known to us, the more we will humbly bow before him in reverence and godly fear. And the more we fear him, the less we will be afraid (Isa. 12:1-6).

(Isaiah 12) "And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. (2) Behold, God *is* my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH *is* my strength and *my* song; he also is become my salvation. (3) Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. (4) And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. (5) Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this *is* known in all the earth. (6) Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great *is* the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

Amen.