

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bible to Exodus 33.

I have titled my sermon this morning – “What now?”

And the reason I titled it “What now?” is because our chapter is going to deal with the uncertainty of what happened in chapter 32.

For those that were not here last week, in chapter 32 – the Children of Israel did something very bad.

They collected earring among themselves and gave them to Aaron and he fashioned a golden calf for them to worship.

And they worshipped it.

They even credited the golden calf for delivering them out of Egypt.

Church – not only did they commit idolatry.

They committed spiritual adultery.

You see God desired to dwell among His people.

That was the whole point of the Tabernacle.

[Exo 29:45-46 NKJV] 45 "I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. 46 "And they shall know that I [am] the LORD their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I [am] the LORD their God.

But the Children of Israel chose to worship a false god instead.

They just experienced the trauma of a devastating self-inflicting wound.

How is God going to respond???

What about the Promised Land?

God could have abandoned them there in the wilderness.

God could have easily said, "I am done with you – you are on your own – have the golden calf lead you from now on"

"What now?"

Let's pray...

[Exo 33:1-23 NKJV] 1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Depart [and] go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.' 2 "And I will send [My] Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the

Hivite and the Jebusite. 3 "[Go up] to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you [are] a stiff-necked people."

So Moses has been up on the mountain interceding on behalf of the people as a result of the golden calf incident.

And the first thing God tells Moses at the beginning of the chapter is actually good news.

Moses – "I'm keeping my promise I gave to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – it's time for the Children of Israel, as descendants, to take up their inheritance that I have given them"

Go again, very good news for them.

Did they deserve it after what they did? No

So right away, we see God's grace.

And then Moses receives a little bit more good news in verse two.

That as the Children of Israel are making their way into the Promised Land, God was going to send an angel before them to protect them and defeat all of the "ites".

Now, some people think that this angel is a manifestation of Jesus Christ – it could be – but it could also be another angel.

And I believe that it is another angel based upon what I had you make a note of in verse three.

Here is the bad news.

Where, God said that He will not go up in their midst.

God refuses to go with these people.

Now, why didn't God want to dwell alongside them as they made their way to the Promised Land?

Because if the Children of Israel decided to pull another incident similar to the one they just pulled with the golden calf, He was going to destroy them.

God knew they were stiff necked people – they were stubborn and proud and would resist Him.

4 And when the people heard this bad news, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments. 5 For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the children of Israel, 'You [are] a stiff-necked people. I could come up into your midst in one moment and consume you. Now therefore, take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do to you.' " 6 So the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by Mount Horeb.

In our study last week, I mentioned that God tested Moses when He offered to consume the Children of Israel and rise up a new people for Moses to lead into the Promised Land.

And we saw that Moses interceded on behalf of the people.

Here, as Moses reveals the bad news to the people, God is now testing the people.

How are the people going to react when they hear that they still have the Promised Land but that they will not have access to God in a close and personal way?

If they are satisfied with the arrangement, it proves that they were only after the gift and didn't care about the Giver.

However, if they challenged God and pleaded with Him for His presence, not only His blessings, it would show a genuine heart for God Himself.

Church, to be given every other blessing is of no value if God is not with you.

For the Children of Israel they had to ask themselves -

What is the value of Canaan?

What is the value of milk and honey?

What is the value of having possessions, if God was not with them?

And they saw that the realization of the presence of God, having this fellowship and company, was infinitely more important than everything else.

Church, do we want the Lord in our lives?

Or are we happy simply with the good things that He gives us – a nice house, a healthy life, a flashy car, obedient children?

If this is what satisfies our soul – I don't think we are reaching deep enough.

Do you want Me? – that is the question God asks.

By the way, we are told later on that these ornaments that were removed, were used in the building of the Tabernacle.

7 Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass [that] everyone who sought the LORD went out to the tabernacle of meeting which [was] outside the camp.

So after giving the report to the people, Moses moves his tent away from the rest of the camp and pitches it outside the camp.

This tabernacle is not the same one that God had given him instruction to build.

Why did Moses move it away from the camp?

First of all, he moved it away from where the people had sinned.

So Moses wanted to make a clear dividing line for those who were willing to separate in some sense.

The text doesn't say that every followed Moses – only those who sought the Lord.

Secondly, God had already told him that His presence was not going to be among the camp.

So by moving his tent, Moses is seeking God's presence.

Church, there will be times in our walk with the Lord where we need to repitch our tents – These are the times when we become so distracted by this, or we get caught up in that or we just lose focus.

But if we simply repitch our tents, if we change location and say, "Lord, I need to be in Your presence", just like Moses is doing – God will meet us there.

8 So it was, whenever Moses went out to the tabernacle, [that] all the people rose, and each man stood [at] his tent door and watched Moses until he had gone into the tabernacle. 9 And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood [at] the door of the tabernacle, and [the LORD] talked with Moses. 10 All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing [at] the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshiped, each man [in] his tent door.

The pillar of cloud is the symbol of God's presence.

So we have the presence of God descending to the door of Moses' tent.

Now, we are not told how many days Moses went in and out of his tent without having met God.

But we are told that every time Moses went in and out, the people who sought the Lord "stood" in solidarity with him.

I want to remind you that God never told Moses to do this – Moses is doing this in response to what God had said – that He was withdrawing from them.

But, by His action – the people are demonstrating to God that they do want Him.

And when God's presence descends upon the door of the tent – the people broke into spontaneous worship.

11 So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.

"face to face" here means that Moses spoke to God "in His presence"

It was an intimate conversation between two people.

Throughout the Old Testament we see the Lord speak to prophets through visions and dreams – but with Moses, God spoke to him directly.

I think verse 11 is one of the most intimate verses in all of scripture that speaks about the relationship between God and man.

12 Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people.' But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.' 13 "Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation [is] Your people."

As Moses is having this intimate conversation with God, Moses reminds God of their personal intimacy.

God had previously said some amazing things to Moses - that He "knew [him] by name," and that Moses had "found grace in [God's] sight."

But now, Moses feels snubbed because God had decided to send an angel to lead them to the Promised Land instead of Him leading them.

So what Moses is asking from God is – for Him to show him the way – not Michael or Gabriel or any other angel.

Then he adds, "consider that this nation is Your people."

In other words, it was God Who had separated them from the Gentiles, and it was God who had led them out from slavery.

Should He not then complete what He had begun in them as well?

Church, Moses was bold in asking this from God, but he based the boldness on the grace that God had already shown to him.

14 And He said, "My Presence will go [with you], and I will give you rest."

After listening to Moses intercede on behalf of himself and the Children of Israel, God tells Moses that His presence will lead them.

Church, God never changes His mind, but He can, and does, relent in order to act according to His nature.

Did God relent because the Children of Israel deserved it? Absolutely not.

God relented because of Moses' interceding –

Moses took it upon himself to seek the presence of God.

He is the one who pitched his tent away from the camp.

And in the same way, when we mess up, when we fall short, we can still experience the presence of God, because just like the Children of Israel, we have a Mediator – one who intercedes on our behalf, a Greater than Moses – Jesus Christ. Who gives us direction as well as protection.

Only those that have the presence of God will find rest in their lives.

Turn with me to Judges 16,

I want to show you something from Samson and Delilah – since we have been speaking about the presence of God.

[Jdg 16:19-20 NKJV] 19 Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. 20 And she said, "The Philistines [are] upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!" **But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.**

Why is it that Samson did not know that the Lord had departed him?

Because he had stopped having fellowship with the Lord.

He had stopped seeking the presence of God.

And as you read the events behind Samson – you see example after example about how he had stopped adhering to his Nazarite vow.

And eventually – he became just like the Philistines – not realizing that the presence of God had departed from him.

15 Then he said to Him, "If Your Presence does not go [with us], do not bring us up from here. 16 "For how then will it be known that Your people and I have

found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who [are] upon the face of the earth."

If You are not going to lead us into the Promised Land, don't make us go.

Moses valued God more than the land that the Children of Israel were going to acquire.

Moses understood that everything is about God restoring the relationship with mankind that was lost in the Garden of Eden.

It wasn't about land, not directly.

It was about love.

"God so loved the world" of lost humans that right in the Garden He promised to send His Son to resolve the issue of sin in order that God and mankind might once again dwell together.

17 So the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name."

Once again, God honored the bold intercession of Moses, and He promised to restore His relationship with Israel.

18 And he said, "Please, show me Your glory."

Moses is two for two –

God's presence is going to lead the Children of Israel into the Promised Land

And God has also promised to restore His relationship with Israel.

Now, Moses asks God "show me Your glory"

Now, Moses and the Children of Israel had already seen glimpses of the glory of God in the cloud that led them out of the wilderness and in the cloud that was on top of Mt. Sinai – yet Moses wanted more.

He was not satisfied – he wanted more in his personal relationship with God.

It seems the more Moses experienced God, the more he wanted of Him.

Church – unfortunately, this is not a typical statement.

For most of us, we are content with the little stiff-necked relationship that we have with God.

Yet Moses, after encountering God in such marvelous ways, longed deeply to see more of God's glory.

Church - If you are genuinely experiencing God in your life, your appetite for His glory will increase, not decrease – like Moses

19 Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will

proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

The first thing God is going to do is describe His nature to Moses.

That is how Moses was going to be able to see God's glory.

And it was going to involve making a proclamation of His name – which would reveal His character.

And the proclamation was about God being gracious and compassionate.

First, His proclamations themselves reveal His glory.

We could put it this way: God's Word, the Bible, reveals His glory.

We don't need the Lord to manifest Himself in some appearance.

We don't need miracles - although we believe He can, and does, still perform them.

We only need to proclaim His Word - through lives lived for Him, and by sharing the Word itself, in all its counsel.

Second, He desires to show His glory - to show Himself - to all Adam's descendants.

When God says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," there is no hint of Him limiting those traits to a few chosen people.

Quite the opposite.

He is able to look upon the world of men and, even though all are born in trespasses and sin, spiritually dead, condemned, He has chosen to offer salvation by grace - as a free gift to "whosoever" - seeing He is actively compassionate.

20 But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."

There are many times in the Old Testament that God appears in human form.

We call these either Theophanies, or Christophanies.

They are pre-incarnation appearance of Jesus - not of God the Father.

In our current state, we cannot be in the full presence of God.

His holiness would incinerate us in our current human bodies.

Does this mean that we will never see God's face?

[1Jo 3:2 NKJV] 2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

We need, and will receive, resurrection bodies which will be fit for eternity.

If Moses was to "see" God, he would need protection.

21 And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock.

22 "So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the

rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. 23 "Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see **My back**; but My face shall not be seen."

So God tells Moses, there is a crack/split in this rock formation.

I am going to position you in that cleft.

And I will pass by,

And as I pass by, I am going to cover your view with My hand.

And as I pass you, I will remove My hand – and the only thing you will see is My back.

Now, I had you underline My back.

Because the word that is used here for back - is never used to refer to someone's physical backside.

So it is not that Moses caught a glimpse of God's backside.

Moses got a glimpse of God's afterglow

And the only way that Moses was going to get a glimpse of God's after glow was if he was in the cleft of the rock.

Who is the rock = Jesus Christ

When was He cleft = on the cross.

[Col 3:1-4 NKJV] 1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ [who is] our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

The only way we will get a glimpse of God's glory is to be hidden in Christ

If we desire to see the glory of God – we need proclaim His name.

Amen

Let's pray...

Encountering the glory of God is all about allowing God to give you the abundance of His presence.

To experience this, I think John the Baptist said it the best in John 3:30, "may He increase, so that I may decrease."

one of the main reasons we do not encounter the abundance of God in our lives is because we are already filled with our own personal abundance.

[2Co 3:18 NKJV] 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.