

**Prepare To Meet God!** Exodus 19 bible-sermons.org August 8, 2010

Two months into the journey and they have arrived, but what a disappointment! It was no land of milk and honey, rather it was barren desert mountain. And this was the place to which Moses was so excited to return? It was sure an exciting two months, but now this? Gathered around the lake that just formed at the base of Sinai, the people must have been discouraged, and that means Moses would have been tempted to be disheartened.

God knew that it would come to this even before Moses left for Egypt, so <sup>12</sup> *He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."* Exodus 3:12 (ESV) The prediction had come to pass. That sign must have encouraged Moses that he was walking obediently in God's will in spite of the problems he had had with the people. (Exodus 17:4)

But what does it mean to "serve God on this mountain"? Remember, to serve also had the implication of worship. (Matthew 6:24) The people were serving Pharaoh, but now they are freed to serve God. The rest of the book of Exodus will flush out all that entails for the nation of Israel.

Though they are headed to the land promised to the patriarchs, **Sinai is their primary destination.** The last two months have been a crash course in preparing them to hear and receive the Word of God.

That is true in many of our lives. We had to come to the end of our self and see over and over that we need God. We had to get hungry and thirsty (spiritually) before we were at a place where we were ready to hear and obey. (Matthew 5:6) We had to face an enemy and find God was the only way to win the battle. **Then we are ready to listen, and that is the primary destination of everyone!** God works in every life to bring them to a place where they can receive His Word.

They were redeemed by the blood of the lamb (Exodus 12:13), delivered from bondage, baptized in the Red Sea, (1Corinthians 10:2) but they still needed to discern His voice and learn His laws for their life. Sound familiar?

Obedying God's Word does not earn us any favor with Him. They were already redeemed. The grace of God preceded the Law of God. But the Scriptures are our instruction manual in how to live a life that is pleasing to Him. One of the first signs that we are redeemed is our desire for the Word, and that is because we have a desire to please our Savior. (Psalm 119:2-3)

**Commented [Paul Wall1]:** Exodus 17:4 (ESV)  
4 So Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me."

**Commented [Paul Wall2]:** Matthew 6:24 (ESV)  
24 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

**Commented [Paul Wall3]:** Matthew 5:6 (ESV)  
6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

**Commented [Paul Wall4]:** Exodus 12:13 (ESV)  
13 The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

**Commented [Paul Wall5]:** 1 Corinthians 10:2 (ESV)  
2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,

**Commented [Paul Wall6]:** Psalm 119:2-3 (ESV)  
2 Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,  
3 who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!

The rest of the book of Exodus takes place in this location of Sinai. About one year will pass while they are camped there. Moses will climb this mountain to meet with God seven times.

<sup>3</sup> while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: <sup>4</sup> You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. As Moses was going up the mountain, God called out to him. This is the first ascent. It sounds like God gave him the orders before Moses reached his destination.

First, God wanted them to keep in mind what He had done for them. Verse 4 is a summary of chapters 6-19. He had borne them on eagles' wings.

Eagles will shove their chicks out of the nest when they get too big. If they left them alone they would just stay there waiting for mom to feed them and eventually starve. She has to push them off the edge of the nest, but then soars after them to catch them if they don't catch the wind. (Proverbs 30:18-19)

God had shoved the Israelites out of the nest. They were definitely floundering. Considering their threats to stone Moses, we might say they were dropping like a rock. (Deuteronomy 32:11) With each fall, God swooped under them and spared them as He patiently taught them that flying meant trusting in Him. (Isaiah 63:9) They indeed caught the wind in the battle with Amalek, but now they need to learn how to thrive. Remember how God has caught you. Remember the flight lessons! (Isaiah 40:31)

And what did God say was the destination? "*brought you to myself.*" It was the presence of the Lord. **God delivers us so that He can bring us to Himself.** (Matthew 11:28) He does it all because He wants to be with us. That is an incredible thing, especially in the light of the rest of this chapter, as the holiness of God threatens to destroy anyone who would get too close! Keep that dynamic tension in mind.

Next, Moses was to relay their special relationship with God. <sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; The question that immediately arises is whether or not the "if" is related to their salvation. In chapter 6 verse 7 God already declared, <sup>7a</sup> I will take you to be my people and I will be your God... In 2:24 God already called them His *firstborn son*.

Treasured possession must therefore mean a special relationship with God that the redeemed may enter into IF they are obedient and keep the covenant. Obedience isn't part of a two-sided deal; it is the expression of gratitude for what God has done.

**Commented [Paul Wall7]:** Proverbs 30:18-19 (ESV)  
18 Three things are too wonderful for me; four I do not understand:  
19 the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a virgin.

**Commented [Paul Wall8]:** Deuteronomy 32:11 (ESV)  
11 Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions,

**Commented [Paul Wall9]:** Isaiah 63:9 (ESV)  
9 In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

**Commented [Paul Wall10]:** Isaiah 40:31 (ESV)  
31 but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

**Commented [Paul Wall11]:** Matthew 11:28 (ESV)  
28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

God added that if they obey His voice and keep the covenant they also *shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*. The main idea in being a kingdom of priests is their access to King. Yes, they would end up in the Promised Land, which was the crossroads of the world's trade routes. There they would have the Court of the Gentiles, a house of prayer for all nations. (Isaiah 56:7) They could convey the words given to Moses and the prophets to those on the trade routes. Some prophets would even be sent to other nations. But first and foremost, **it meant access to the King of the kingdom.**

God was about to descend from the mountain and meet with them. To meet with God is the high privilege of all believers. We are a kingdom of priests because of the blood of Jesus that makes us holy. (1Peter 2:9)

Moses was to deliver this threefold message of God. Remember how God brought you to Himself. You must listen and obey, then you'll have the privilege of being His treasured possession, a nation of priests. J. A. Motyer remarks that this pattern is extremely important in understanding the pattern of Scripture and our place as the covenant people of God within it. **The sequence is this: the saving acts of the LORD, our response of obedience, and the blessings obedience brings.** That is why verse 4 is past tense and 5 and 6 are future tense.

The telltale characteristics of a child of God are that they keep, listen to, and obey the Word of God. When they do, they are a treasured possession. They have access to the very throne of God. Please don't misunderstand this point. All who place their faith in what Jesus did for them have the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, but it is when we walk in disobedience that our intimacy with God is broken. (1Peter 3:7) We may still be in covenant, in other words be in saving grace, but like someone who has stubbornly ignored their spouses sincere requests, we avoid their presence. (Psalm 66:18) It is when we serve each other that we really treasure one another. Would God want you to represent Him when you are walking in disobedience? He treasures you because you are in Jesus, but He doesn't treasure a condition of disobedience.

Moses hurried down the mountain to relay the Word of God to the people. <sup>8</sup> *All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD.* Moses got an unequivocal "Yes!" from the people. They declared they would be obedient. They wanted to be God's treasured possession. After all they have seen, the amazing intervention, the miraculous provision, and the defeat of their enemies, who wouldn't want to have access to this God?

Moses headed back up the mountain to give God the answer. This is trip number two. <sup>9</sup> *And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you*

**Commented [Paul Wall12]:** Isaiah 56:6-7 (ESV)  
6 "And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—  
7 these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

**Commented [Paul Wall13]:** 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)  
9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

**Commented [Paul Wall14]:** J.A. Motyer, *The Message of Exodus*, p 196

**Commented [Paul Wall15]:** 1 Peter 3:7 (ESV)  
7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

**Commented [Paul Wall16]:** Psalm 66:18 (ESV)  
18 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

*forever.*" God would appear to the people as a theophany. When they hear God speak the Ten Words they will know Moses truly does "talk with God".

Clouds throughout the Scripture became a picture of the presence of God. A cloud was God's presence leading them through the wilderness. (Exodus 13:21) Jesus ascended in the clouds and will return with clouds. (Acts 1:9-11) The idea is that God's unveiled glory would be too great for any human being to witness. God must hide the bulk of His glory from being manifest or we would die. (Exodus 33:20)

Just as we will see a consuming fire to be representative of His glory, the holiness of God will not abide the presence of evil. (Habakkuk 1:13) When the tabernacle will be built, the priest must enter the Holy of Holies in a cloud of incense. It is not that God can't see through it, it is that we need to understand that we are so sinful, that were it not for the grace, mercy, and love of God, His justice and holiness would rightly consume us. We Americans have almost completely lost this fear of God. The Proverbs tell us the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. (Proverbs 1:7)

God's next instructions to Moses are along this same vein of thought. <sup>10</sup> *the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments <sup>11</sup> and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. <sup>12</sup> And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, 'Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. <sup>13</sup> No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain."*

The people had three days to prepare to meet God. They were certainly an unholy people, and no amount of preparation on their part could make them holy, but God wanted the idea to sink in. There would be space even between the veiled glory of God and the people in the most consecrated condition they could muster.

There are limits to what God will put up with. These limits around the holy mountain where God was to come down are also pictures of the boundaries of God's grace. Moses could go up anytime, for he was God's servant. God had already dealt with his heart. But the nation was still entertaining idolatry and unsure if JHWH is the only true God.

God is dangerous! Or as the *Chronicles of Narnia* so aptly state it, "He's not safe, but He's good!" In fact, **He's so good that He obliterates evil.** He is like antimatter on evil. It must be dealt with if it is in His holy presence. (Isaiah 6:5)

**Commented [Paul Wall17]:** Exodus 13:20-21 (ESV)  
20 And they moved on from Succoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness.  
21 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

**Commented [Paul Wall18]:** Acts 1:9-11 (ESV)  
9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.  
10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,  
11 and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

**Commented [Paul Wall19]:** Exodus 33:20 (ESV)  
20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."

**Commented [Paul Wall20]:** Habakkuk 1:13 (ESV)  
13 You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and are silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?

**Commented [Paul Wall21]:** Proverbs 1:7 (ESV)  
7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

**Commented [Paul Wall22]:** Isaiah 6:5 (ESV)  
5 And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

Moses went down the mountain again and relayed the need for getting ready to meet God. Moses was acting as a priest, preparing the people to meet God. I don't think they understood the vast gulf between their condition and their holy Creator. Most people today do not grasp their true condition. That is why they cannot understand our desperate need for the Great High Priest that Moses pictured, Jesus. (Hebrews 4:14)

**Commented [Paul Wall23]:** Hebrews 4:14 (ESV)  
14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Moses added that there should be no sexual intercourse during this time of preparation. We must understand that he is not implying that sex is evil. There was sex in the Garden before the fall of man. (Genesis 1:28) Sex is a wonderful gift of God to be enjoyed in the confines of marriage. (Hebrews 13:4) But remember, marriage is a picture of our relationship with God. (Ephesians 5:23-24) Sexual relations should be a total giving one person to the other. God had them abstain from that total intimacy to focus on a total intimacy of a different nature, intimacy with Him.

**Commented [Paul Wall24]:** Genesis 1:28 (ESV)  
28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

*16 On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.* The burning bush was the same manifestation of Almighty God, but now the people need a clearer revelation of God's awesome presence, and that reinforced that gulf between their condition and God.

**Commented [Paul Wall25]:** Hebrews 13:4 (ESV)  
4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

Have you ever been in the middle of powerful thunderstorm? It's frightening but awesome at the same time. When the light and sound come at the same time, you know it's really close. Your heart pounds. You can feel the burst in the air. Your hair will even stand on end with the electrical charge. Imagine experiencing that and the ground shaking, and the whole mountain is smoking and shaking. The trumpet grows louder and louder until your ears can hardly take it. You know the holy God that struck down the firstborn, is coming to meet with you.

**Commented [Paul Wall26]:** Ephesians 5:23-24 (ESV)  
23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.  
24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

You've heard me say it before, but we need the reminder. Every time we pray we should imagine grabbing hold of the ends of two giant downed power lines. We come before Almighty God. If it were not for the blood of Jesus we would be consumed in an instant. (Hebrews 10:31)

**Commented [Paul Wall27]:** Ephesians 5:23-24 (ESV)  
23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

God called Moses up the mountain again and God repeated the rules about boundaries and even warned the priests that they too must be sure they are consecrated. The office does not automatically make them holy. The same is obviously true with pastors and elders. **We must be sure our lives are sanctified.** (Hebrews 12:14)

**Commented [Paul Wall28]:** Hebrews 12:14 (ESV)  
14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Moses seemed to think this was unnecessary, but God sees things man doesn't see. God has no desire to destroy life. He is always seeking to transform the wicked. (Ezekiel 18:23) He wants His grace to prevail, but He must be just. It

**Commented [Paul Wall29]:** Ezekiel 18:23 (ESV)  
23 Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

may be that there was a temptation to step into the cloud and try to see more of the glory of God. That would be fatal to someone who wasn't sanctified.

Moses went down the mountain again and made sure the people and the priests understood. The man of God obeys even when he doesn't understand. When all was as God instructed, God came down the mountain and spoke the Ten Words. They are the Ten Words that were to guide the community of Israel. He gave order to creation with ten words and now He is giving order to a nation with ten words.

The holy and awesome God spoke to man. Through His Word He became intimate with man. This is the marriage ceremony of Israel and JHWH.

Do you see the parallel to what Jesus did for us? Mankind needs to be prepared to meet God, to receive His word. Jesus' teaching made it clear that the gulf between us and God is great. (John 3:3) Jesus described the punishment of hell that awaits those who are not prepared to meet God. (Matthew 5:29-30) But then Jesus made a way for us to be holy.

The glory of God was manifest on the cross. Yes, the sky went dark, the ground shook, but the really **glory was the man on the cross who was bearing the wrath of a righteous God** for your sins and mine. He entered the darkness of the cloud and the wrath of God fell on Him as He bore all our sins. (Matthew 27:45) The veil in the Temple that kept people from the presence of God was torn. (Matthew 27:51) He made it safe for us to enter the cloud by giving us His righteousness, making us holy before a holy God. (Hebrews 7:19)

As a man, Jesus blazed the way for us into the presence of God. (Hebrews 9:11-12) If we will hear His words and obey them, which is only possible because He makes us a new creation, the promise of being a treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, becomes ours. (1John 2:5-6; 1Peter 2:5) We can walk in disobedience and have our prayers hindered, but why would you want to?

The plan has never changed. It is just more fully revealed. God is still as awesome and holy, but through Jesus, God brings us to Himself! (Hebrews 8:6) The tension between God's desire for intimacy and the distance between a holy God and us is done away in Christ Jesus. In Jesus, the boundaries are lifted, and you can enter into the cloud. Are you grabbing a hold of those power lines?

#### Questions

- 1 What was the primary destination? Why?
- 2 What is one of the first signs of conversion?
- 3 What is the picture of being borne on eagle's wings?
- 4 ...for what purpose?
- 5 Discuss the dynamic tension in the chapter.

**Commented [Paul Wall30]:** John 3:2-3 (ESV)

2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."

3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

**Commented [Paul Wall31]:** Matthew 5:29-30 (ESV)

29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

**Commented [Paul Wall32]:** Matthew 27:45 (ESV)

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

**Commented [Paul Wall33]:** Matthew 27:51 (ESV)

51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

**Commented [Paul Wall34]:** Hebrews 7:19 (ESV)

19 (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

**Commented [Paul Wall35]:**

**Commented [Paul Wall36]:** 1 John 2:5-6 (ESV)

5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him:

6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

**Commented [Paul Wall37]:** 1 Peter 2:5 (ESV)

5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

**Commented [Paul Wall38]:** Hebrews 8:6 (ESV)

6 But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

- 6 What does the "if" and "then" relate to in verse 5?
- 7 What is "treasured possession"?
- 8 What is a "nation of priests" imply?
- 9 What is the pattern in verses 4 and 5?
- 10 How did God convey the need to fear Him?
- 11 Why the abstaining from sexual relations?