

EXODUS 33:1-17 GOD'S PRESENCE IS NEEDED

God's ultimate reason that He delivered Israel out of Egyptian bondage was that He wanted to be in their midst, so they could worship Him. God had given instructions to Moses so that they would have a way to be in His presence. The Israelites couldn't wait and didn't do things on His terms but on their own. This led to disaster, in that God threatened to wipe them out as a nation. Moses pled to God for them as the mediator and God restrained His wrath on the nation. But what would this mean for the rest of the journey? How was God going to relate to them from there on? What would now be their destiny? That is where we are at now, in the book of Exodus.

1. THE WITHDRAWAL OF GOD' PRESENCE VV 1-6

The whole reason for God's instructions to Moses on the mountain for the building of the Tabernacle was that He would be right in the middle of them as they journeyed on. He was going right into the Promised Land with them. However, something terribly different was getting ready to happen. This would be a shocker to Israel.

A. GOOD NEWS

vv 1-2

1. Israel spared from God's wrath

Moses had been begging God not to destroy Israel. 3,000 of the ones who led them into the idolatry were killed by the Levites. God was just and righteous and does not wink at sin, but He also, at the same time, displayed His mercy and grace by restraining His judgment on the nation as a whole. He decided to spare them because Moses pled for mercy. Not only that, but in this first verse we see that they are directed by God to continue on with the journey to Canaan. This certainly seems like good news. It could be that things were going back to the way they were, despite their great sin.

2. Heading to the Promised Land

God said He would bring them into the land that He promised long ago to the patriarchs. He was going to drive out the enemies and bless them abundantly. Everything seemed to be right on schedule.

3. Protection

God would send an angel to go with them. God would protect the people from their enemies.

4. Covenant promise

All the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will still be carried through. So, actually, it didn't seem to

work out as bad as it could have. Even though this all is good news, there is a problem.

B. BAD NEWS

v 3

1. Distancing of God

The people who you brought,(v 1)--/ (5:1)My people
He does not call the people as My people as He had done before. He refers to them as Moses' people as He did in 32:7. He still was not identifying Himself very much with these people.

An angel--not the Angel of the Lord as preincarnate
He does not say My angel, as it would mean an extension of Himself. It was just going to be an angel, not the personal God Himself.

2. **I will not go in your midst.** This is a blunt statement. It had to be completely discouraging to the Israelites. It must have been demoralizing as He said, "You can go but I'm not going with you." The significance of this is staggering. The whole idea behind all of this deliverance is that God would be in the midst of them. Now, He tells them He will not be there with them. Now, all the previous 31 chapters are undone. God's presence will not be there. The greatest blessing one can have is God, Himself. We want His nearness, favor, love, and approval. For Him not to be there makes everything they have as worthless. This is not just a set back, but the end of the road. They saw this as a death sentence. What would you think if God said you can have happiness and money, and prestige, but you cannot have my presence? Can you imagine getting to heaven, and then finding out that God is not there? Heaven would not be heaven. Samuel Rutherford said "Heaven would be hell, if He were not there." Without God, everything is nothing, and with God is everything. The greatest blessing one can have is God Himself. He is our life and our enjoyment. The people definitely realized they had lost a great deal. It is ironic that the people lost out, even when they had wanted God's presence. They went about it in the wrong way. God does not operate on man's terms, hence they experience the consequences. If we want God's presence, we have to approach Him on His terms and bow to Christ. He is how we commune with God. Why would God want to remove Himself from them? One reason why was, that they were a stiffnecked people. God was afraid that He might destroy them was another reason.

C. RESPONSE OF ISRAEL

vv 4-6

There is surely contrition here. They are broken over what they had done, and now knew they deserved to lose the blessing of the presence of the Lord. Their response is appropriate.

1. Sorrow

They mourned over their sin and did not put on their ornaments as an outward expression of their mourning. In the eastern world this was a sign of mourning as they would take off their finery and their ornaments. These were the kind of ornaments that made the idol that got them in trouble in the first place.

2. Expression of repentance

By doing away with the ornaments they outwardly showed They were truly repentant

Turn away from idols

They put away their ornaments, and their idols.

2. THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITH MOSES VV 7-11

A. TABERNACLE OF MEETING

V7

1. Moses' communion with God

The very fact that Moses pitches a tent and calls it a Tent of meeting is no accident. It is an alternate tabernacle in which at least Moses has access to God. It is not the tabernacle proper but it is something temporary for Moses to meet with God. The people don't have access but they watch as Moses entered and then they worshipped. It sure reminded of what they lost by their sin.

Moses was as close or closer to the Lord than any other man in history. God has an intimate communion with Moses like no other one in the scriptures.

v 11--face to face No other prophets had this type of relationship.

2. Reminder to the people of what they lost

Without God, nothing else matters. He is the Blessor and Without the Blessor, the blessings mean nothing.

B. THE ONLY HOPE FOR REGAINING THE PRESENCE

1. Watching Moses

They wished they could have had that access too. But for God connecting to the people at a distance in a tent with Moses is an encouragement that God has totally disconnected. He had not entirely abandoned them. They recognize that Moses is the Mediator as he walks to the tent. They have to worship from afar.

2. Pillar of cloud
The cloud showed visibly that He was there. Later
The cloud will descend to guide the entire camp.
3. The Blessing, rather than the blessings
Experiencing the blessings without God's presence

C. FACE TO FACE

3. THE HEART OF THE MEDIATOR VV 12-17

A. FIVE ARGUMENTS

Moses is entirely unsatisfied with the present circumstances. God had said "My presence will not be with you." So Moses goes boldly before the Lord arguing his case. He goes in behalf of all the people.

1. Moses complains God has not told him who He is sending
I have been appointed the Mediator but You are not telling
Me what I need to know. Who are you sending? Who is
This angel?
2. Moses pleads the argument of election-the unchangeable
You have favored me and know me by name, so why don't
You tell me your plans? I have been chosen for this. You have
Chosen this people for yourself. I will be your God and you
Will be my people. They are people by your choice.
3. Supreme importance of God's presence
Without it nothing else matters. If You are not going, Lord,
Kill us now. We were made for Your presence. Moses knew
How important His presence was.
4. God's presence is the only proof of God's favor on Moses
Apart from your tabernacle and your presence how can your
Acceptance of me being mediator be proved? If the two parties
Can't be brought together, how can I be called a mediator?
5. God's presence the only true mark of the choice of His people
Isn't going with us a distinguishing mark for us vs, the rest of
The pagan nations? You make us different.

B. THE LORD'S RESPONSE

God says, Moses you have prayed and I have heard you. And I
Will answer. God gave favor to Moses and He spoke to him face
God had also found favor with Noah in Gn 6:8

To face. This reminds you of the Great mediator, Christ.

This is a foretaste of the Mediator.

God does as Moses had asked because he was pleased with Moses.
God will be present with the people for Moses' sake. Once again,
Moses has succeeded in moving God to compassion.

Therein lies the hope for all people. They and we are in need of
The Mediator.