

## Exodus, Part 19: Prepare to Meet God!

1. Pray
2. Review – prayer, praying for yourself is okay.
  - a. Open your awareness that it isn't JUST presenting your needs to God but encountering Him.
3. Remember (Exodus 19:1-4)
  - a. *In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. 2 When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain. 3 Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: 4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself.*
  - b. The first thing that God says to Moses at the mountain of God is **"You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles wings, and brought you to myself."**
    - i. God reminds them of how He has been their incomparable guide and provision in this journey and He calls to their attention that they experienced these things first hand.
      1. To disbelieve would be to disbelieve their own eyes and their own memories.
    - ii. He shows them how it was He who did these things. He reminds them of who He is by reminding them of what He has done on their behalf.
      1. He brought about 10 plagues, each one aimed at one of the Egyptian deities, and each one in successively greater magnitude until the Egyptians had to acknowledge that their "gods" were nothing compared to The Lord, and they let the people go.
      2. He then led them to a seemingly hopeless spot, a 3 mile wide beach that backed up to the waters of the Red Sea and then stood between the Egyptian armies that were pursuing them and the Israelites. He parted the Red Sea and drowned the Egyptians who chased them.
      3. Then He provided food from heaven and water from a rock in the desert.
      4. He also empowered them to defeat the Amalekites.
      5. He has navigated their journey, a journey they could have never done without His supernatural help.
        - a. **Have you** ever looked back over your life and seen the hand of God on your life?
        - b. **What have you** seen what God has done for you, how He bore you up on eagles wings?
        - c. **My guess** is yes, because of what He has done for you and in your life, because of how he has led you on your life's journey...that is why you are here today.
        - d. **How thankful** are you?
    - iii. Illustration of thankfulness
      1. There is a story of a stingy man. He would bargain and haggle on a price, never paying the price asked. One day, while eating fish, a bone became lodged in his throat and within minutes he could scarcely breathe. His wife frantically called the family doctor, who arrived just as the patient's face was turning blue. The physician quickly removed the bone with a pair of forceps. After he was breathing normally again, although overwhelmed with gratitude to the doctor for saving his life, he began to worry about the cost. So he turned to the good doctor and asked, "How much do I owe you for this small two-minute job?"
      2. The doctor, who knew his patient's miserly habit all too well, replied, "Just pay me half of what you would have when the bone was still stuck in your throat!"

- iv. When you were lost, hungry, miserable, lonely, a slave to a habit or torment, would you have given all you had to be free and to find relief.
  - 1. Now that you are free, well fed, happy, with friends...do you hold back giving God what He asks of you? That is the question of thankfulness.

4. You Are Mine! (Exodus 19:5-8)

- a. *5 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession (treasure) among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."7 So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. 8 All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD. 9.*
- b. **The response God asks from us to His love is obedience.**
  - i. He doesn't insist you try to appease Him with gifts, or with specially worded prayers or formulas. He doesn't demand that you pray three times a day with your head to the floor, nor does He ask you to fast a month at a time. None of these things will EARN you His approval.
  - ii. **You cannot make God love you any more than He already does.**
    - 1. We obey not because we are trying to earn God's love.
    - 2. If you are obeying God because you think it will gain you points with Him, you are wrong.
      - a. Obedience is the only adequate response to the display and reception of His love in your life.
      - b. We obey because we have already received God's love, not because we are trying to earn it.
      - c. Obedience is a response to God.
      - d. We love Him only because He first loved us!
  - iii. You can't manipulate Him and you cannot get Him to do your will.
    - 1. I watched a documentary on Athens recently. Their city-god was Athena, and they gave offerings to her along with a host of other gods to have her protection in battle and for prosperity.
    - 2. But Athena had wings. So they made a statue of her without wings, so she couldn't fly away and leave them undefended.
    - 3. By their own actions, they defied the very nature of what a god must be.
    - 4. They CONTROLLED their goddess, which is a contradiction of the definition of deity.
      - a. See, God is completely outside of our control or our manipulation.
      - b. He is completely separate and uninfluenced by our choices.
      - c. He does not exist to worship us.
    - 5. The definition of OMNI t means that He is supreme. T
      - a. here is none like Him, none greater.
      - b. The demons and so called deities that some societies worship are not OMNI.
        - i. They have powers, which people bow before.
        - ii. But these powers are not even remotely comparable to the Lord God's absolute, supreme power.
      - c. Galatians 4:8-9 *However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn*

*back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?*

5. A Treasure!

a. *...then you shall be My own possession (treasure) among all the peoples*

- i. The word “possession” can be read as “treasure.”
  1. What a strange thing to say.
  2. Other nations were much more prosperous, much smarter, bigger, stronger.
  3. Yet God saw this miserable band of ex-slaves as a treasure.
    - a. **God saw the Israelites not as they were but as they would be.**
    - b. God saw them as infinitely valuable.
- ii. Johnny Lingo and the 8 cow wife:
  1. There once was a town on an island in the South Pacific where men paid the dowries for their future wives in cows. The highest dowry that a man had ever paid a father for his daughter's hand in marriage was four cows.
  2. One father in the town had a daughter who was very plain and unattractive, and most of the townspeople doubted if she would ever find a husband.
    - a. Face it pops, she is just too ugly!
  3. However, one day a rich, successful rancher who owned many cattle saw the woman and fell in love with her. He went to the girl's father and began negotiations for the dowry. Everyone expected him to ask for a bargain, because no one had ever made an offer on her before. In fact the father was hoping to get one cow even though he was going to ask for two. But before he could place his demand, Johnny Lingo said, "I will pay you eight cows."
  4. The father was shocked! The whole village thought that Johnny Lingo was the biggest fool they had ever met!
  5. Johnny took his wife home on an island far away. The following year, during the annual festival, he brought his bride with him for a visit to her family.
  6. But no one recognized her as that homely girl that had been raised in their village. She had become the most beautiful woman anyone had ever seen.
  7. When asked how this transformation took place, Johnny had only this to say. “I love her, and I have always wanted to have an eight-cow woman for my wife”
  8. Because her husband valued her, she began to carry herself differently. She stood straight and tall. She dressed well. Her whole countenance changed because of the value placed on her by someone who loved and cherished her.
- iii. **When you are treated as valuable you will begin to look and act as one who is valued.**
  1. This is what is happening to Israel. The homely, plain, slave nation is being bought for a very high price. An unheard of price.
  2. God Himself has come into their time and space and made them His very own.
  3. His love will have the net effect of shaping this unruly flock of nomadic sheep herding slaves into a nation from which salvation will come to the entire earth!
  4. It wasn't them who reached out to God, but God who reached down to them and rescued them and made them His people.
- iv. You too, are a treasure to the Lord.
  1. He doesn't see you as garbage. You might have been thrown away by someone, but God will pick you up and dust you off, and put you back together.
  2. He will fix what you need and make you whole!
  3. You are far too valuable to be thrown away by God.
  4. You are a treasure to Him!

- v. Romans 5:6-8 *6 “For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*
  - 1. It wasn't us who reached out to God, but God who reached down to us and made us His people.
  - 2. He gave an unheard of price for us!
    - a. He didn't do it because we were good, but in spite of the fact that we hated Him and were in rebellion toward Him.
  - 3. What will be your response to Him?
    - a. In a few minutes you will have an opportunity to respond to Jesus. You will be able to say “YES” to Him and receive the gift of His love.

6. Prepare to Encounter the Lord (Exodus 19:10-11)

- a. All of these instructions are the prelude to what is about to happen on the mountain.
  - i. God is going to meet with them. They are going to encounter God!
- b. *10 The LORD also said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; 11 and let them 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.*
- c. Encountering God is an incredible thing.
- d. I wonder, how much time did you prepare for meeting God this morning?
  - i. The Israelites were given three days to get ready. They are told “*consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; 11 and let them be ready*”
  - ii. Do you know what consecrate means? It means to set aside. Set apart. It is the same word for “be made holy.”
    - 1. **To consecrate means to singularly devote your attention and mind to God.**
      - a. I wonder, how consecrated were you this morning?
        - i. Did you come into church with your mind racing about all that you have to do this week?
        - ii. Did your mind wander during our song service about what you were going to do when you got home, or where you were going to eat lunch today?
        - iii. Were you still carrying the worries and concerns of every day life into this encounter with God?
    - 2. **To consecrate also means to dedicate something to its highest purpose.**
      - a. Part of this act of consecration was for them to examine themselves and to see what they were dedicated to.
      - b. We might even want to ask ourselves from time to time, “what am I consecrated to?”
        - i. My job? My family? The knowing and experiencing of God?
  - 3. Then what they to do next is their response to the answer of that question.
    - a. *Ex. 19:10-11 “...wash their garments; and let them be ready*
  - 4. Why do you wash your clothes?
    - a. Well the answer is obvious, because they are dirty!
    - b. The washing of clothing is symbolic of cleansing of one's conscience.
    - c. **Complete consecration, which includes honest self examination, invariably leads to confession.**
      - i. We come away with a clean conscience when we admit to God that we haven't been living with Him as our highest purpose.
      - ii. This is often call “confession.” It means to “agree with God.”
    - d. God already knows all of your faults.

- e. But He wants you to become aware of how they come between you and Him.
  - f. He wants you and I to become aware of how often we choose ourselves instead of Him, how far apart we have drifted from Him, and to return to Him.
    - i. Rev. 2:5 *“Look how far you have fallen from your first love! Turn back to me again and work as you did at first.”*
5. Finally, they are to be made “ready” for their meeting with God.
- a. It is unfortunate that we have become so comfortable with God, that we treat Him as if He were one of us.
  - b. Most of us prepare better for a date with our spouse than we do for an intimate meeting with the Transcendent God of the Universe.
    - i. We buy flowers, take a bath, put on clean clothes – we try to look and appear our best for our date.
    - ii. Why? Because our spouse or date is SPECIAL!
    - iii. Is God special to you?
  - iii. Without preparation and consecration, worship becomes an empty, meaningless, and might even become a disrespectful ritual which only tends to leave us moving away from Him instead of toward Him.
7. Why do we consecrate ourselves? Because God is SOOOOO Holy! (so special)
- a. *12 “You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, ‘Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.’ 13 ‘No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether beast or man, he shall not live.’ When the ram’s horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain.” 14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people, and they washed their garments. 15 He said to the people, “Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.”*
  - b. *16 So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.*
  - c. *18 Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. 19 When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder. 20 The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.*
  - d. AW Tozer writes, *“No one can know the true grace of God who has not first known the fear of God.”*
    - i. If you have no sense of who God really is, and have no reverential fear of Him, then you have no sense of what His grace really is.
    - ii. It is said that one cannot be saved until they see they are lost.
      - 1. You will never appreciate the wonderful gift of freedom until you come to grips with the reality of your slavery.
      - 2. You will never know the true value of mercy until you have faced the gallows and received your last minute reprieve.
      - 3. Until you know the true holiness of God and have faced the horror of hell, you will not appreciate what God has done for you through Jesus Christ at the Cross.
  - e. You might notice that they were told that there were boundaries set around the mountain, which itself was being made holy solely by God’s manifest presence upon it. They could come no closer than the foot of the mountain.

- i. The picture on this mountain is that of a throne surrounded by smoke, a thick cloud, quaking loudly, lightening flashes and the sounds of loud trumpets.
- ii. The shechinah or the glory of the Lord descended upon the mountain and appeared in the sight of all the people.
- iii. It must have been an awe inspiring sight for these people just as it would be for us.
  1. Last Sunday night, one of our folks said, that during the sermon last Sunday morning, that he became aware of the reality of God and the very real possibility that God might shake this place! And he began to wonder and worry about what it would be like.
  2. Would you tremble? Would you run? Would you fall to your knees?
  3. In Acts chapter 4, the place was SHAKEN and they were filled with the Holy Spirit again.
- iv. I believe that before the Israelites can meet God they have to have an appropriate sense of reverence, gratitude and awe.
  1. **We do not meet with God as equals.**
  2. God is superior, transcendent, and completely “other”
  3. He is all powerful, we are weak.
  4. He sees everything but we can only see the present.
  5. He is the Creator, but we are the created.
  6. He is the standard by which our lives are to be measured. God is not measured by us, but rather we are measured by Him.
- v. Under the Law and the old Covenant there is a distance between the people and the Lord. The people cannot draw near, they cannot gaze upon the Lord.
  1. There must still come a mediator who can take us to the mountain top.
  2. Only holy people can stand before God.
  3. Jesus alone has made those who trust in Him holy.
- vi. Are you prepared to encounter God? To see His glory? Do you think you can come before Him without preparation?
- vii. If you belong to Jesus Christ, you no longer stand at the foot of the mountain, but instead according to Hebrews 4:16, *“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*
  1. Because of Jesus, we now go to the top of the mountain and behold boldly the very face, the glory of God. We have unlimited access to the very throne, the holy of holies, the inner court of the temple.

## 8. Closing

- a. Are you prepared to encounter God? To see His glory?
  - i.
- b. Maybe you have never trusted Jesus to be your Savior.
  - i. Today, perhaps you realized that if you died that you wouldn’t go to be with God because you have rejected Him. You can receive His love today. In our time of response, I encourage you to slip out of your seat and come forward for prayer. Jennifer and I will pray with you that you might receive the infinite love of God.
- c. Are you ready to “consecrate” your life to Jesus?
  - i. Are you ready to give Him all of you, to dedicate your life to Him as your highest purpose?
  - ii. You cannot meet with Him until you do.
  - iii. You are a treasure to God.
    1. He has paid an unheard of price for you.
    2. Won’t you consecrate your life to God today
- d. Slip out of your seat and come forward to the kneeling rails. Or you can come to Jennifer and I for us to pray with you. Make a decision to respond to God today.