

Series: **Exodus: Seeing God in the Journey**
Title: **Approaching and Accessing God**
Text: **Ex. 19-20:20**

Three months after the people left Egypt they arrive at Mt. Sinai. They will stay there for at least ten months

THE STORY: FEAR OF GOD LIMITS THE PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO GOD

Moses goes up the mountain

Ex 19:5-6

⁵ *“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; 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 people of Israel.*

Moses relays God's message and they respond

Moses calls the elders and the people and tell them. And they responded **that they would do ALL that the Lord commanded**

19:8 - *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.*

God tells Moses to have the people consecrate themselves (19:9-22)

Wash (v.10)

Ex 19:10-11

¹⁰ *the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments ¹¹ 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.*

- Wash their garments
- Withhold from sexual encounters

Ex. 19:15

And he said to the people, “Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.”

Limits (v. 11-14)

Ex. 19:12

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.

- Do not touch the mountain or they would die
- On the trumpet sound they can come up to the mountain but not on the mountain
- Let the priests consecrate themselves – v 22
- Aaron may come up – v 24

God speaks to the people from the Mountain (20:1-21)

- A trumpet – they come and surround the base of the mountain
- thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, - 20:18

- “The word here is unusual and might be translated ‘torches’, meaning ‘flashes’ or ‘fireballs’. This is the same word used for the symbol of God’s presence that Abraham sees at the making of God’s covenant with him (Genesis 15).”

The Ten Commandments (20:1-17)

Respect that which is Holy: 4 commandments about Him

- Ex. 20:1-11
- No other gods
- No graven image – creation over creator
 - Iniquities to 3rd and 4th generation
 - Steadfast love to the 1000th generation
- No profaning His name
 - meaning
- No abuse of the holy day
 - Day of rest

Respect for others: 6 commandments about others

- Ex. 2-:12-17
- Parents - honor
- Murder – anger
- Adultery – fidelity and purity
- Stealing – respect
- Lying – truth and faith
- Coveting - jealousy

They are too afraid and want Moses alone to hear the words and relay them to them

Fear of God takes over the people

Ex. 20:18-19

¹⁸ Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off ¹⁹ and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.”

A reaction: Let not God speak with us:

- One might think that Israel loved the dramatic experience at Mount Sinai, and especially the honor of hearing God’s voice like a loudspeaker from heaven.
- Instead, because of the great awe and dread they felt, **they wanted God to stop speaking to them directly.**

- Biblically speaking, an up-close encounter with God could just as often be troubling as it might be comforting.
 - Israel could not see, feel, and hear this much from God and not at the same time be acutely aware that He is perfect and holy, and they were not.
- This is a typical reaction of those who came into the presence of God.
 - Such as Isaiah who felt undone before God (Isaiah 6:1-5) and John who fell as a dead man before the Lord (Revelation 1:17).

iii. "What Israel dreaded, Moses coveted (Exodus 33:18)." (Cole)

A request - You speak with us, and we will hear:

The people promised to hear and (by implication) obey the word of God that came to them by Moses. They failed in this promise, both soon after this and in the longer term.

- In following generations, Israel interpreted the law downward, so it could be more easily obeyed, removing the heart and intent of the law.
 - Jesus exposed this shallow understanding of the law in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17-48).
 - Anger, lust, divorce, oaths, retaliation, loving enemies

- **I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.** Matthew 5:17
 - This progressed to the point where Saul of Tarsus could say and mean of himself, concerning the righteousness which is in the law, [I was counted] blameless (Philippians 3:6) According to their standards – claimed himself blameless

Phil 3:9

Being found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

A Resignation: Let not God speak with us, lest we die:

In drawing back from direct dealing with God, Israel wanted Moses to be their mediator, **fearing death if they did not have a mediator.**

- i. Man's desire for a mediator – someone to act as a go-between with us and God – is only good if it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, for there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

Moses addresses the Fear

Ex. 20:20

And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin."

Do Not Fear Yet Fear

Do not fear; for God has come to test you:

The people of Israel wanted to separate themselves from the manifest presence of God, but God meant it for good to test them.

- **The test revealed to them what kind of God they served...**
 - ...a God above nature, personal, good, and holy.

- **The test revealed to them what God's expectations were...**
 - ...that God is a moral God who expects moral behavior from His people.

- **The test revealed to them their own weakness...**
 - ...and need for God's grace, help, and rescue.

This distinguishes between two kinds of fear.

That His fear may be before you: So that you may not sin:

- “Do not *fear*” speaks of the tormenting fear that comes from both guilt and danger.
- “That His *fear* may be before you” speaks of the attitude of honor and reverence that leads to respect and obedience.
- We love Him because He first loved us.

So that you may not sin:

Israel did not learn this lesson well. In approximately 40 days they danced around a gold calf with both idolatry and immorality (Exodus 32).

They back off in fear and Moses drew near to the darkness where God was – 20:21

- Israel dreaded the powerful presence of God, but Moses longed for it. Moses would later more directly and eloquently show this desire (Exodus 33).
- Moses had a relationship with God the common man in Israel did not have. Through the circumstances of his life and the direct revelation of God, Moses was aware of both God’s holy power and also of God’s glorious grace.

God reminds them of His holiness

‘You have seen for yourselves that I have talked with you from heaven. 20:22

- **No other Gods nor images (20:23)**
 - Because God did not reveal Himself to Israel in any form or image, they were not to make any other god of silver or gold to set beside (be with Me) God.
- **No man made altars (24-25)**
 - Our word altar comes from the Latin *altus*, meaning high or elevated – because altars were raised to give them prominence and dignity. Yet the Hebrew word for altar (*mizbach*) has the sense of a place of sacrifice or killing, coming from the Hebrew word to kill.
 - No man made altar – God’s creation would suffice – so that man receives no glory in the offering.

One God and His altar that will expose your nakedness – 20:26

- God wanted no display of human flesh at His place of covering sacrifice. Steps might allow the leg of the priest to be seen. God doesn’t want to see our flesh in worship.

What God does want from us in worship is seen by Jesus’ statement in:

John 4:24

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

God wants worship that is characterized by Spirit (as opposed to flesh) and truth (as opposed to deception or mere feeling).

Ex. 20:24

In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you.

SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAYS

IN CHRIST WE HAVE ACCESS TO GOD AND CAN APPROACH HIM

Clearly we have the greatest moral judicial code known to humanity in the Ten Commandments

We could spend an entire series focusing on each of these commandments, and many a pastor has.

Through Christ the Mediator, we have access to God

Eph. 2:18 - *For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.*

Eph. 3:12 - *...in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.*

Heb. 4:16 - *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Heb. 10:19 - *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus...*

Before You Come To God Prepare Yourself– External and Internal

Wash: In Christ We are made Clean

- You cannot cleanse your life,
- ...but you cannot hold onto your life if you intend to submit to God.
- Come to Him open and receiving – none of our merits will be credited to us as we approach.
- Come in your nakedness. No outer garments to proclaim your worth.
- No man made altar – but only through him.

1 Corinthians 6:11

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

- Completely clean by the one who can cleanse completely

Rev. 7:14

*I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. **They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**"*

- We are made white by the cleansing that comes from His sacrifice

Prioritize the closest intimacy in your life

- You cannot be your highest priority.
- Your deeds cannot be your highest priority.
- Even your spouse cannot hold a more intimate relationship with you.
- God must be where your heart resides.

In Christ We Walk In His Parameters: called holiness

- It starts with obedience to mountain – but not up the mountain
- An altar of His making, not your making
- He sets the way and we obey

- Walk in holiness 1 John 3:9; 5:18
- Walk in love 1 John 4:7
- Walk in truth 1 John 5:1
- Walk in perseverance – 1 John 5:4
- Walk with a testimony – 1 John 5:9-10

His ways are holy and to be obeyed

- A Holy Mountain
- A Holy Altar
- A Holy People

Fear Him, but do not run from Him.

Though it is better to obey God out of fear than to disobey Him, God's ultimate motivation for obedience is love.

This is clear from **1 John 4:18**

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

Facing the Glory of God

- A Superior being – fear overwhelm
- His voice and presence are powerful
 - Trumpet, thunder, flashes of lightning, smoking and darkness

Facing the guilt of sin

- A Holy Being
- Isaiah: "I am a man of unclean lips"
- Adam – ashamed
- Saul – knocked down and blinded

Facing Grace of Christ

- A Forgiving Being
 - If you run...His way will be veiled

This message is on approaching God and having access to Him
He has made a way through the mediator Christ to access Him

Fear in reverence: Do not fear and run away: But run toward Him today
The Grace of Christ calls you to Him.

Come to the Lord, hear from Heaven, run to Him and be clean.