

The Book of Exodus

Moses: The Mediator Between God and Israel

Text: Exodus 33 – 34

- I. The Separation from Jehovah (Exodus 33:1-6)
- A. Following their sin with the golden calf, God expressed a desire to destroy the nation of Israel.
 - B. Moses, as a true mediator, begged for them to be spared and sought their forgiveness.
 - C. God told Moses to lead the people to the Promised Land.
 - D. Now, however, He informed him that they would go without God's presence in their midst.
 - 1. God had promised to send His angel before them.
 - 2. This He would do, but He would not dwell in their midst.
 - 3. The reason for God's absence was the fact that He cannot have fellowship with sin.
 - 4. If God dwelt among them, He would destroy them.
 - E. Thus, He ordered the people to remove their ornaments (finery, adornments) so He would know what to do to them.
 - 1. If they refused, it would demonstrate continued rebellion.
 - 2. If they obeyed, it would demonstrate repentance.
 - F. God would respond in accordance with their actions.
- II. The Separation from the Tabernacle (Exodus 33:7-11)
- A. As a demonstration of their separation from God, Moses set up the tabernacle on the outside of the camp.
 - 1. Remember that the word 'tabernacle' simply means, "Tent."
 - 2. This was not The Tabernacle, for that had not been constructed.
 - 3. It likely refers to Moses' tent or to some tent that was set apart to be used until the Tabernacle was constructed.
 - B. The point of this action was to show that God was separated from His people because of their sin.
 - C. Moses (and Joshua), who had not been involved in the sins of Israel, was still able to approach and commune with God.
 - 1. The phrase "face to face" does not mean that Moses saw the face of God.
 - 2. Instead, it means that God spoke to him openly and simply, revealing His will and His character (cf. Gen. 32:30; Num. 12:8; Deut. 5:4; 34:10).
- III. The Plea of Moses and the Promise of God (Exodus 33:12-23)
- A. Moses was disturbed at the thought of leading the people without the presence of God among them.
 - B. Moses could not understand how to reconcile this idea with the fact that he had found grace in the eyes of God.
 - C. Thus, he asked the Lord to "show me now thy way."
 - D. God responded that He would go with them and lead them to Canaan.
 - 1. This implies that Moses' intercession had led to Israel's forgiveness.
 - 2. Yet, the question of how God could forgive them was still unanswered.

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- E. As confirmation, and to better understand God's nature, Moses asked to see the glory of God.
 - 1. This is not a selfish desire of Moses to see God's unveiled glory.
 - 2. Instead, it is a desire to understand better the character of God.
 - 3. How can one so holy and pure forgive the terrible sins committed by His people?
- F. God promised to grant Moses' request.
 - 1. First, He would cause His goodness to pass before Moses – demonstrating that God is good by His very nature.
 - 2. Next, He would proclaim His name to Moses – revealing His true character.
 - 3. Also, He would show His sovereignty, grace, and mercy in His forgiveness (cf. Romans 9 *where this Scripture is quoted by Paul*.)
 - 4. Finally, He would protect Moses by not allowing him to see the full, unveiled glory of God.

IV. The Return of Moses to the Mountain (Exodus 34:1-7)

- A. In preparation for the revelation of God's glory, Moses was to cut two tables of stone (like the first ones he had broken) and come up into the mount.
- B. As He had promised, God appeared before Moses and passed by, proclaiming His name.
 - 1. He is Jehovah God – all-powerful and almighty.
 - 2. Yet, He is merciful, gracious, longsuffering, good, true, and forgiving!
 - 3. This does not mean that He will overlook sin.
 - 4. But, He will forgive those who return to Him in obedience.
- C. This is how God could forgive the terrible sin of Israel – because of His mercy and grace.

V. The Restoration of the Covenant (Exodus 34:8-27)

- A. Upon hearing this, Moses bowed upon the earth and worshipped God.
- B. He prayed for forgiveness for the nation and begged God to go with them.
- C. God responded by reminding Moses (and the people) of the terms of the covenant.
- D. If they would keep His will, God would forgive and restore fellowship.
- E. Thus, Moses was to write these words to remind the people of their duties.

VI. The Glory and the Vail (Exodus 34:28-35)

- A. Moses was in the mountain for 40 days and nights, without food or water.
- B. When he came down from the mountain, his face was shining with brightness.
- C. He delivered the Word of God to the people and then put a vail upon his face.
- D. Afterward, this vail was worn whenever he was before the people, but removed when he went before the Lord.
- E. Paul refers to this in teaching the difference between the Old and New Testaments (2 Corinthians 3).
 - 1. Tables of stone / Tables of the heart
 - 2. Letter that kills / Spirit that gives life
 - 3. Glory veiled and fading / Glory unveiled and eternal.