

## FACE TO FACE Exodus 33:7-11

**INTRODUCTION:** Do you ever get intimidated spiritually? I know, that sounds strange, but sometimes when you run into someone who seems to have reached a level of spiritual maturity and personal intimacy with God far beyond what you are familiar with, it does tend to make you wonder what happened to you!

One evening at a church prayer meeting years ago, the pastor called on a woman who was home visiting family...a missionary for many years and now was past normal retirement years. When she stood to pray, I realized I was in the presence of someone way beyond anywhere I had ever been! She prayed with such familiarity and was so comfortable speaking to the Lord that I actually peeked one time to see if something was going on I needed to see as well as hear.

When I read of the account of Moses going to meet the Lord at the tent of meeting, those old feelings come back. What did Moses know that I still need to find out? When he spoke with the Lord as friend to friend, was he really a model of what could be for me as well?

***THESIS: Through Jesus Christ we have been blessed with the opportunity to enjoy a lifetime of sustained intimacy with the Lord—we are now the temple of the Holy Spirit by His grace!***

### I. DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE WITH GOD

--All of us have observed that there are differences in the kinds of experience we each have of when we approach the Lord...some seem to have a more intense interaction than others!

--As we read this account of Moses' experience, we find that those differences are rather pronounced, comparing what it was like for the people of Israel to what it was like for Moses.

#### A. INTIMATE: MOSES

##### 1. God Called Moses to a Different Relationship

--From the beginning of his calling, God had chosen to speak to Moses in a manner that was distinctively different from everyone else.

--From the burning bush on, Moses heard the voice of God and conversed with Him.

--Now we find that the nature of the relationship he had with the Lord took on a different flavor still.

##### a. A Special Place to Meet

***Ex. 33:7*** Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting...

--The tent did not restrict the interactions between the Lord and Moses but did give him a consistent place to go and meet with the Lord.

##### b. A Unique Way to Communicate

***Ex. 33:11*** Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.

--The greatness attributed to Moses is based largely on the fact that he enjoyed such an unusual relationship with the Lord...God spoke to him directly, face to face, in a way that He did not do with others.

***Num 12:6-8*** He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. <sup>7</sup> "Not so, with My

servant Moses, he is faithful in all My household; <sup>8</sup> With him I speak mouth to mouth [“face to face”], even openly, and not in dark sayings, and he beholds the form of the LORD...

--It is important to note that this does not mean that Moses was given the right to look directly into the glorious face of God since no one, not even Moses could do that and live.

**Ex. 33:20** But He said, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”

--This expression refers to the open and generous nature of the Lord in speaking with Moses unlike any other time...a gracious freedom to commune with One who is invisible yet lovingly making Himself known to His friend Moses.

## **B. ACQUAINTED: OTHERS IN ISRAEL**

--Israel was a called out nation, but that did not mean that they all enjoyed the privileges of access to the presence of God that Moses did.

### **1. Miriam and Aaron**

--Conflict arose because others were jealous of the access Moses had that was not available to others.

--Miriam and Aaron wanted to claim that they had that level of intimacy with the Lord but God Himself rebuked them for their presumption.

**Num 12:8** With him I speak mouth to mouth, Even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?”

### **2. The People**

--Whenever God would speak to Moses, the people were both intrigued and intent on what was happening.

#### **a. They wanted to go and inquire of the Lord**

**Ex 33:7** ...And it came about, that everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp.

#### **b. They watched as Moses entered His presence**

**Ex 33:8** And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent.

#### **c. They worshiped as Moses remained in the tent of meeting**

--Although they could not enter in as Moses did, they sensed the sacredness of the moment because of the presence of the Lord—so they worshiped, but at the safe distance of the entrance to their tents, not the tent of meeting!

**Ex 33:10** When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent.

## **C. OBLIVIOUS: THE NATIONS**

--But just to put this in perspective, there was yet another group...the nations who had no access at all to the light of the glory of God, no way to know Him or speak personally to the Only True God.

--They were oblivious to the existence of a personal God who desires to know and be known by those He created in His image.

**ILLUS.** Just back from Indonesia, we saw abundant evidence of vast millions of people who have an awareness of the existence of deity, but who know nothing of a personal God who knows them and loves them, who died for them and wants them to know and love Him.

We visited one of the largest Buddhist temples in the world, a massive monument to futility. There, carved into stone as a guide for seekers, was their effort to make sense of life's journey to nirvana, perfect peace and oneness.

Then down each street and on the edges of each field we saw little shrines to the thousands of idols and little gods of Hinduism...evidence of an awareness that there is more than the mortal but desperately hopeless that the immortal can be known in a personal way.

### Observations:

#### 1. Intimacy with God depends upon His calling, not our curiosity.

--God Himself sets the terms of our relationship with Him, not us and not just to satisfy our desire to lay claim to special status with Him.

#### 2. Awareness of God's presence does not secure access to His presence.

--Just because we believe He is present and acknowledge that He is the Lord does not mean that we command the circumstances that control when and how we come into His presence.

#### 3. Ignorance of God's invitation to come to know Him does not have to persist—His calling is for all nations to come.

--Even though the kind of relationship Moses had with the Lord was unique, that does not mean that no one else can know the Lord with ever-growing intimacy.

## II. DEVELOPING LEVELS OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

--The experience of Moses was extraordinary and much to be desired by all who know that the Lord is God alone.

--But what he knew of intimacy with God offers hope for all who long to know Him...because Jesus Christ now offers a way for all who will believe in Him to come into the presence of the Lord and abide, remain, live and walk with Him.

### A. DRAW NEAR BY GRACE

--Moses was able to come into the presence of the Lord only because God graciously invited him to come...only by grace could he enter and only by grace can we.

--We may enter and draw near to Him by the grace of Jesus Christ who opens the way for us to draw near...

#### 1. Confidently – A High Priest

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

--As our High Priest, Christ guarantees our right to draw near to the throne of God.

#### 2. Reverently – A Holy Place

--Moses found that there were special places where the Lord made His presence known in powerful ways:

- Holy Ground of Burning Bush

- Holy Place of Tent of Meeting
- Holy Place in the Tabernacle/Temple

--We have been invited to be the dwelling place of God Most High, the temple of the Holy Spirit, the sanctuary of the Living God.

**1Cor. 3:16** *Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

## **B. WAIT PATIENTLY IN STILLNESS**

--Moses could not be impatient when he went into the tent of meeting to converse with the Lord...the very fact that the Lord's presence was accompanied by "the pillar of cloud" as a visual reminder of His glory made it clear that God was in command of the situation.

### **1. Unhurried waiting**

--As we enter the presence of the Lord, He invites us to wait on Him and not be in a big hurry to get on to something else...as if something else could be more important!

**Psa. 78:1** *Listen, O my people, to my instruction; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.*

### **2. Attentive stillness**

--But as we wait, we are not to pass the time allowing our minds to wander all over the place—we are to be still so that we can pay attention for that moment when He shows us some truth, opens up some insight, confides in us what is on His heart.

**Psa. 78:1** *Listen, O my people, to my instruction; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.*

**Psa. 25:14** *The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them.*

## **C. GAZE INTENTLY IN WONDER**

--As Moses went in to meet with the Lord, how can we not wonder what He saw—the radiant splendor being so great that his face shone when he left the presence of the Lord?

--But even the rest of Israel stood outside their tents and "gazed after Moses until he entered the tent," as their gaze upon the place where the Lord made Himself known caused them to rise up and their hearts be lifted up in worship.

--When we gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and consider the greatness and glory of God, we fall down before Him in worship and are overwhelmed by the wonder of who He is.

**Note:** Instead of "gazing intently", we are more inclined toward "glancing quickly" and then turning our mind's eye toward other things. By not dwelling on Him, we see only surface impressions which do not captivate or call us to adoring worship. Consequently, *worship remains shallow* because *wonder never develops*.

--And so we are called to...

- *Consider*
- *Reflect*
- *Meditate*

--For now we behold the Lamb of God, the Word which became flesh so that we might behold His glory.

## **D. LISTEN CAREFULLY WITH EXPECTANCY**

--Moses came to expect that when he went in to the tent of meeting, the Lord was going to speak...so he expected to hear from the Lord.

--If we approach the Lord and never actually expect to hear from Him, it is probable that we will not listen carefully and so miss the gentle words and quiet urgings He offers us from His Word.

***Psa. 143:8*** *Let me hear Thy lovingkindness in the morning; for I trust in Thee; Teach me the way in which I should walk; for to Thee I lift up my soul.*

--If we do not hear the voice of the Lord in His Word, could it be that we have not prepared our hearts to listen carefully and expectantly?

### 1. God's Voice to Moses

--As we have already noted, God spoke to Moses and he heard the voice of the Lord.

### 2. God's Word to Us

***Heb. 1:1-2*** *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, <sup>2</sup> in these last days has spoken to us in His Son,*

## E. SPEAK HUMBLY WITH RESPECT

--Because the Lord took the initiative and opened the communication with Moses, Moses realized that he could speak to the Lord also...that his prayers were welcomed by the Lord.

--So Moses spoke with humility and respect, appealing to the Lord on behalf of others...calling on Him to show the way, to provide for His people, to act not only for the good of the people but for the glory of His name.

## III. DISTINCTIVE LEVELS OF THE GLORY OF GOD

--Because we have these things written, we have the opportunity to see the range of possibilities available to us by faith in Jesus Christ, the revealer of the glory of God and the living Word.

### A. MOSES

--Moses saw, heard, and spoke with and remained in the presence of the Lord in times of amazing fellowship and personal intimacy.

--But the impact was short-lived and soon faded.

***2Cor. 3:12-13*** *Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech, <sup>13</sup> and are not as Moses, who used to put a veil over his face that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away.*

### B. BELIEVERS

--God has promised us something better, something lasting, in a glory that does not fade but radiates from us instead of upon us...because the Holy Spirit sent by Jesus Christ resides in us and the glory shines forth from us.

***2 Cor. 3:18*** *But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*

--We also know that one day we will see Him in all His glory and we shall be like Him!

***1John 3:2*** *Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.*

### C. JESUS CHRIST

--The perfect presence of glory, of course, is Christ Himself...the King of Glory.

--The glory of the Father was made known through the Son.

**2Pet. 1:17** *For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"*

**--So Moses reflected that glory...believers radiate that glory...but Jesus IS that glory!**

**CONCLUSION:** Therefore, as Moses enjoyed a level of intimacy with the LORD God that allowed him to speak with Him face to face, to hear His voice and to relate to Him as friend to friend, we now have been given something greater!!

**Heb. 11:39-40** *And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,<sup>40</sup> because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.*

So Moses longed for something that was promised but he never found it. The intimate fellowship and friendship he had with the Lord never produced a heart where Christ Himself would make His home! Not until the cross could the heart be properly prepared by the forgiveness and cleansing that came from the blood He shed. Now, the abiding fellowship and friendship does not have to take place outside the camp in a physical place designated for that purpose...we are now the designated place...our hearts are now the "tent of meeting...the tabernacle...the temple of the Spirit" who remains in us.

In Christ, we need no longer be intimidated by the relationship someone else has with the Lord—we can all boldly approach Him, abide in Him and speak with Him face to face!

Moses was great is providing a model of communion in the tent of meeting...Jesus is greater in opening the way and bringing us into the holy place with Him!

Therefore, we must never settle for standing far off and letting our worship be second-hand like the Israelites...by letting our relationship with the Lord be distant when He wants us to draw near...but we must come to Him with a readiness of heart to be with the One who wants to speak to us, confide in us, to love us. Through Jesus Christ, each of us may confidently and boldly dare to draw near and know that He longs to make His glory known to us!

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