

**MEETING GOD AT THE MOUNTAIN
EXODUS 19:7-15**

NEED: TO HAVE LIFE-CHANGING ENCOUNTERS WITH THE LIVING GOD.

PROPOSITION: ANY REAL ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD REQUIRES PERSONAL PREPARATION.

OBJECTIVE: TO LEAD GOD'S PEOPLE TO HAVE LIFE-CHANGING ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD.

INTRODUCTION:

Mr. Sinai is called "The Mount of God." Evidently God has chosen mountains as a place He would personally reveal Himself to His people. The experience of Israel at the Mountain was an unforgettable experience.

The experience is a reminder to us of the reality of our God. Francis Shaeffer wrote a little book entitled, The God Who Is There. He contended that for modern man the word "God" does not refer to someone who is really there---not to a real person. In our generation it is a word that refers only to that for which we have no human explanation. In the Bible, it is different. There is a Person who is there in the history changing moments. He is actually there at Mt. Sinai.

The lesson I want us to carry away from this text is the seriousness of meeting with holy God. Our behavior and language would suggest that our contemporary attempts at worship have become far too casual. If our gatherings for worship are supposed to be meeting with God, we need to revisit the Mountain of God and learn from the experience of Israel. To fail to do so could have severe consequences.

I. OUR MEETINGS WITH GOD ARE BY DIVINE INVITATION ONLY.

What happened at Mt. Sinai was by divine arrangement. It would never have occurred to Israel that such an encounter with God was possible, and if they had thought of it they would not had any idea about how to cause it to happen.

1. It is by invitation only because of the greatness of God.

It is a general principle that the greater the person the more difficult it will be to have a meeting with them. If you went to Washington and desired to meet with the President of the United States you might gain access to some lovely White House official, but probably not with the President. This is true even though we have a representative type of government through which we elected the President. It would be even truer if we had a sovereign King as our ruler.

Do you remember the fear Esther had about going before the King without an invitation? She was his favorite wife, but she met with the King only when it pleased the King. This is even more true of the sovereign Lord of the universe. You approach him only by invitation.

2. The invitation comes through His messenger.

In this case Moses was the messenger. He was sent from the Mountain to the people to announce the invitation. God wants to meet with them, so He sends Moses to them.

This is His regular pattern. He normally extends His invitation through human messengers.

This is why I am here --- God sent me to invite you to a meeting with Him.

3. The invitation is an expression of pure grace. There is no way that mortal man ---any mortal human being---could ever deserve a face-to-face meeting with the Eternal God. This involves the Creator meeting with the creature, flesh meeting with Spirit, the defiled meeting with the holy. This invitation is an expression of the heart of God.

God does seek a relationship with His creature man. He desires to do him good and not evil.

Even though it is an experience of true grace, it comes as a summons. The invitation should be treated with all gravity. Can you imagine what might have happened if Israel had spumed or refused God's invitation? Yet, we are sometimes guilty of just this type of response to God's invitation. Yet, we are sometimes guilty of just this type of response to God's invitation.

II. OUR MEETINGS WITH GOD REQUIRE PREPARATION.

So you have an appointment with Deity? What is the protocol? What will be the proper dress? Exactly how are you supposed to respond in His presence? Everyone who has an appointment with the Queen of England knows that this type of question must be asked. You would not

offend the Queen. Actually, it is in the prerogative of the Queen to determine this. You have an audience with the Queen on her terms ... not yours. So, it is with God.

God sent Moses to the people with just the right steps to take in preparation.

1. There is spiritual preparation.

The Lord instructed Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow." The older version translates the word "sanctify." To consecrate or sanctify means to set someone or something apart for the Lord.

Surely this must have dealt with the condition and attitude of the heart if you are going to meet with God. Then, inwardly you must be set apart for the Lord for his ownership and use.

You do not rush into the presence of the Lord with a divided heart.

2. There is physical preparation.

The people were instructed to wash their clothes. This should not be seen as a ritualistic cleansing, but rather as an outward preparation for the meeting. You just did not get to meet with the Lord without being cleaned up and dressed up. Your outward appearance would be a sure sign of the importance you placed on the person you were meeting with.

We have gone through an interesting thing in our day ... a rather dramatic change. When I was a boy growing up in East Tennessee, you "dressed up" to go to church. While my family believed

that cleanliness was next to godliness, at least my mother did, we did not take a bath everyday.

Taking a full bath was a luxury reserved for Saturday so you would be clean on Sunday.

To take a full bath was quite an ordeal. Water had to be drawn from the cistern, heated on the kitchen stove, poured in the washtub in the middle of the floor, and then you could bathe. After the bath, the water must be carried outside and dumped. On weekdays, you did not do all of this. Rather you would you warmed water and washed off with a washrag. But on Saturday, you got ready for church on Sunday.

When you went to church on Sunday, you wore the best you had. Critics would say that we were trying to impress each other, but I suspect the real background was that we knew we were going to the house of God.

Something has changed. We now "dress down" to come to church. Some would suggest that we are trying to make everyone feel comfortable, whether they have nice clothes or not. Could it be that we are more aware of others than we are of God? What we wear should reflect an awareness that we are meeting with Holy God, at least that is what we profess.

There was one other detail that relates to the physical preparation. "Abstain from sexual relations." This probably has no reference to the sexual relations being morally unclean, but rather has to do with the physical readiness, the alertness, with which you approach God. If the energy was expended in this intimate relationship, the person might be physically depleted and dull when they arrived at the Mountain.

Since the Lord's Day is set aside for a weekly meeting with God, should this affect our Saturday night activities? It is a fact that many people came to the Mountain physically and mentally dull because of the way they spent their Saturday, especially their Saturday night.

There would be a greater reality in our meeting at the Mountain if we came to the Mountain spiritually and physically prepared.

III. OUR MEETINGS WITH GOD ARE ACCOMPANIED WITH DANGER.

The Lord realized the dangers so He put in place some protection for the people. He told Moses, "Put limits for the people around the Mountain and tell them, 'Be careful that you do not go up to the Mountain or touch the front of it. Whoever touches the mountain will surely be put to death'." Actually this seems to have involved the construction of a protective barrier around the Mountain.

This sense of greatness seems to have been lost on us. This is a word that we need to hear again.

1. There is danger to the curious.

Why would anyone want to wander up this Mountain? Human curiosity -- it has killed more than the proverbial "cat." It is not difficult to see why someone would want to scale the Mountain just out of curiosity.

We see examples of this in our day. A reported sighting of the Virgin Mary can attract a multitude of curious people. This has happened right here in Lubbock.

Meeting with God is too serious ... He is a consuming fire! There is no place for the curious on the Mountain.

2. There is danger to the careless.

Someone might carelessly wander up the Mountain; they were just not watching where they were going. The consequences would be death so God called for the fence.

Do you remember the case of Nadab and Abihu that is recorded in Leviticus 10? There were the two older sons of Aaron that had been consecrated to the priesthood by Moses. They lost their lives because they acted carelessly. They went behind the veil into the Holy of Holies bearing "unauthorized fire." The priest always went into the presence under a cloud of incense, but they were not following the instructions the Lord had given. They were struck dead on the spot.

There is an indication in the text that their carelessness was caused by drinking too much wine. Immediately following this tragic incident, the Lord said to Aaron, "You and your son are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die" (Lev. 10:8-9). You must be alert and careful when you approach the Lord. He is holy; He is a consuming fire.

Are you aware of the dangers? Have we been too casual and careless in our approach to the Mountain? The Bible provides other examples of the danger!

IV. OUR MEETINGS WITH GOD CAN BE LIFE TRANSFORMING.

Unfortunately, this meeting did not impact the people of Israel as much as it should have. They were soon acting as though they had never been to the Mountain. But the potential is always there.

1. We discover the will of God in such meetings.

This whole chapter is really the preface to the revealing of the law in the next chapter. The Ten Commandments were given at this Mountain. They were the principles by which the people were to live.

God has a way of communicating His will to us in such meetings. Insights into His will come out of communion with Him, not out of research about Him.

2. We renew our strength in God through such meetings.

I am not sure that Israel did but we can.

We can learn from our Lord at this point. He received a revelation and renewal of strength to finish the journey while He was on the Mount of Transfiguration. This is the way it should be.