

Sent: Wednesday, May 5, 2021 10:21 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Exodus 33

"And the LORD said, 'My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest!' (Exodus 33:14)

Last week, we saw the tragic--and hard to understand--account (in Exodus 32) of how Aaron and the sons of Israel so quickly turned away from the LORD after Moses had extended his time on Mt. Sinai, which was aflame with God's presence--a sure sign to Aaron and the sons of Israel that Moses would not be returning! And then, the people's sinful request for Aaron to "make a god who would go before them"! And, the surprising response from Aaron to do it! Using the gold earrings from the women to make a "golden calf" for them to worship and to make sacrifices to--all totally contrary to God's clear commands "not to have any other gods before them, nor to make an engraved image, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or in the earth beneath...!"

Breaking their covenant with God!

And so, God's anger "burned" against them and He was about to destroy them all, until Moses "interceded" for them, and "entreated" the LORD, among other things, reminding Him of His promise to Abraham to give his descendants the "land" which they would inherit forever! And so, Exodus 33:14 says, "the LORD changed His mind"!

Then we saw an angry Moses, returning from the mountain and, after seeing what was going on, "shattering" the two stone tablets, engraved with "the finger of God," and burning the idol with fire and "grinding it to powder," and scattering it on the surface of the water, and making the sons of Israel drink it! Then confronting Aaron directly, and accusing him of committing a "great sin,"--which he tried blaming on the people!

Next, we saw Moses standing before the people and calling for "whoever was for the LORD" to step out and come to him! After the sons of Levi were the only ones to respond, he had them draw their swords and kill (presumably) the ringleaders of the insurrection--then charging the people to rededicate themselves to the LORD and vowing to try to make "atonement" for their sins before the LORD. He even asked the LORD to "blot him from the book" if He would not forgive their sin!

And so, Exodus 32 ends with the LORD saying that He would "blot them out of His book" (in His own timing) but charged Moses with leading them "to the place He told him" (the "promised land") and that He would send His angel to "go before them" (and not Himself, lest He "destroy them on the way")!

And that is where our lesson picked up last nite (on Exodus 33)!

The bottom line is that the "God of all-mercy" did not abandon His people--keeping His promise to take them to the promised land! But something changed! He said He "would not go in their midst," because they were an "obstinate (stiff-necked) people"! (Constable notes that "breaking the covenant resulted in separation of fellowship with Him, but not their relationship with Him"! They did not cease to be "His people"!)

Isaiah 59:1-2 says, "Behold the LORD's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have "separated" you from your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear!"

At the LORD's command, the people "stripped themselves of their ornaments," which MacArthur says, "depicted outwardly the people's sorrow of heart." JJ Engelbrecht (who led our full group session) saw it as an act of "repentance"!

From then on, until the completion of the tabernacle (which was to be positioned in the center of the camp, among the people), Moses pitched a "tent of meeting" (where he would meet with the LORD) "outside the camp"! Exodus 33:9 says that "whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak to Moses...face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend"! And verse 7 says, "everyone who sought the LORD" would go out to the tent...and gaze in wonder!

The rest of Exodus 33 records Moses, relentlessly, seeking to "know God more, and His ways, that he might know Him better, and find favor in His sight,"--and (to get Him to change His mind?) and lead ("go before") His people! And, if that was not enough, to "show him His glory"! Whatever he did seemed to work! Verse 14 (our memory verse) says, "And He (the LORD) said, "My presence shall go with you and I will give you rest!" And Moses even succeeded in getting the LORD to "show him His glory"! And, apparently, to agree to, in fact, "lead" His people!

JJ Engelbrecht summed up Exodus 33 this way (describing the "mercy of a Holy God):

- God is so holy that you cannot approach Him in your sin!
- But God is so merciful that He makes a way to be with you!
- (But) you must respond to the mercy of this Holy God!

So holy and yet so merciful!

Psalms 103:7-11 says, "The LORD made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel. The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness to those who fear Him!"

The apostle Paul had this same desire to "know" God above everything else! In Philippians 3:8-10 he wrote: "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain the resurrection from the dead!"

And the Psalmist would add: "Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore!" (Psalm 16:11, KJV)

Have we come to grasp the "surpassing value of knowing Him"?

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