

Sent: Wednesday, May 12, 2021 11:38 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Exodus 34

"...The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations!" (Exodus 34:6-7)

Last week, we saw in Exodus how the LORD instructed Moses to go forward with the sons of Israel to the land that He promised to give them, and said He would send "an angel" before them and drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and Jebusite--but that He "would not be going up in their midst...because they were an obstinate people, and He might destroy them on the way"! After that, Moses set up a "tent of meeting," outside the camp, where he would speak with the LORD in a very intimate way--"just as a man speaks to his friend"! And there, Moses relentlessly sought to "know the LORD and His ways," that he and the people might find favor with Him, and that He might change His mind and "go up" with the people, and "dwell" among them, in going to the land to which He had called them! He even pleaded with the LORD to "show him His glory"! And his "intercession" apparently worked with the LORD--and He promised that "His presence would go with him"! But with "them"?

As we got into Exodus 34 last nite, Dan Crenshaw (who led last nite's large group session) set the scene for the lesson by stating that the "lingering question" remained: will the LORD go with them, and dwell in their midst, even though they had broken the covenant, and committed a great sin?

Exodus 34 begins with the LORD instructing Moses to "cut out two stone tablets, like the former ones"--like the ones He wrote on? You know, the one you "shattered"?? Get your act together, Moses, and meet Me up on the mountain, in the morning! And come alone!" (Do you sense a bit of sarcasm in His voice? Like he was speaking with a friend?)

And verse 4 says, Moses did exactly "what the LORD told him to do"! (Which was a reminder of last Sunday's sermon, about the "wedding at Cana of Galilee," when Ryan Francis told of how that when they "ran out of wine," Mary, the mother of Jesus, appealed to Jesus, and then approached the servants, and told them to "do whatever He tells you to do"! Which is exactly what every follower of Jesus needs to do!)

Well, Exodus 34:5 says the LORD "descended in the cloud...and passed by in front of Moses and proclaimed...His compassion and graciousness and lovingkindness and faithfulness...the One " who keeps lovingkindness for thousands...and forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin..."! Just the words Moses was longing to hear, and could, and would, recite back to Him in a prayerful appeal for the LORD to, in effect, change His mind and "go along with them (the children of Israel) and be in their midst, even though the people were so obstinate! And pardon their (our) iniquity...and take them as His own possession"!

But what about the second part of the LORD's proclamation? That He would "by no means allow the guilty to go unpunished--even visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and on the grandchildren (no less!) to the third and fourth generations"? Moses seemed to have intentionally (conveniently?) avoided responding to that part!

Moses wanted to believe in the God of compassion and grace who could, and would, somehow make a way to forgive iniquity (or as Dan put it: "stay with sinners")! The God who could somehow find a way to be both the "Just and Justifier" of all who believe! Moses seemed to be suggesting this! But there is no way he could have understood God's eternal redemptive plan! But God did! And He acted in mercy and grace! The kind we would get to "realize" after God would send His Son "in the fulness of time"! (II Corinthians 5:21 says, "He (God) made Him (Jesus), who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him!" He made a way!)

And so, God (in His mercy and grace) renewed His covenant with the sons of Israel and agreed not only to dwell with them but to "perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations!" And He said that "all the people among whom you live will see the workings of the LORD..." and it would be an "awesome" thing that He was going to perform ("driving out before them the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite")! Wow!

But there were some conditions! They were commanded "to make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which they were going...but to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim... and not worship any other god...for He is a jealous God! (Fearsomely protective, like in a marriage bond! An exclusive relationship! They "belonged to Him"!)

Then the LORD proceeded, in verses 18-26, to remind them of some of the basic ordinances which they were to observe "religiously," including the three yearly "feasts"--which, as Dan pointed out, were to help them maintain "covenant fidelity"!

The LORD then "sealed" His covenant with Israel by (again) "writing on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments"! And verses 29-30 say, that when Moses was coming down from Mt. Sinai, carrying the tablets, "the skin of his face shone" because of his time with the LORD--and the people were afraid to come near him (Dan called it a "fearsome glory")! But after he had called all the people together and finished telling them all that the LORD was requiring them to do, he "put a veil over his face"! (The apostle Paul would later write, in II Corinthians 3:7-18, that Moses "used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not see the end of what was fading away...but that we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed in the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit!" And John would write (in John 1:14) that the Word (speaking of Jesus) became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth!")

And so, Exodus 34 talks about "the God who stays with sinners"!

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness...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 (revere) Him!"

Doesn't it make you want to know Him better, and do what He wants you to do ?

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