



E X O D U S

GOD'S SELF-REVELATION

Before Life Group

Read Exodus 19-20

Three months have now gone by since the people of Israel were saved from the mad king tyrant of Pharaoh. During that time, the people had followed the guidance of God with a pillar of smoke and fire guiding them day and night. The presence of God was with them and guiding them to safety. Even more so than that, God had made provisions for them for both food and water, to provide for them supernaturally. Clearly, God intended for the Israelites to not only survive but to live a thriving life.

When they arrived at Mount Sinai, getting closer and closer to the promised land, the Lord called Moses. The Israelites were being called to a special relationship with God that would provide an example and testament to the world as they lived out God's will on earth. "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." [Exodus 19:5-6, NIV](#)

The presence of God had gone before them, guiding them through the desert, but this was intrinsically different. God desired to meet with Moses, face to face, as you and I would meet one another for coffee. God would be coming in a cloud so that the people would be able to hear God and understand the special role that Moses was playing. The cloud would be for the protection of the people but it was important that the people of Israel still heard the voice of God.

So this marked the beginning of three days of preparation before the grand meeting would occur. The people would need to consecrate and purify themselves according to the standards of holiness that God had set before them. No perfection could be tolerated and no amount of sin would be permitted to remain. Furthermore, Moses was to limit how far up the mountain the people could go, making out the lines and areas that the Israelites could and could not cross. Furthermore, because of the sovereign and righteous presence of God, anyone who breached the boundaries would immediately fall dead. After all, sin cannot tolerate the presence of holiness and holiness is incredibly stronger than sin.

This was no ordinary meeting between God and man. The way God directed Moses to speak to the people clearly was building up to be different than the other encounters that God had with man. God descended to earth to meet with His servant and to enter into covenant relationship with Moses. God, while being not from this world but from the spiritual world, had come down to our world in order to bring to His people a new understanding of His presence and purpose in the world.

The Transcendence and Immanence of God

As God instructed Moses to prepare the people for His coming, it was a direct representation of the vastness that lay between God and man. God is a transcendent God who reigns in the perfection of the throne room of Heaven. He is holy and wholly other. It would take three days of the people purifying themselves in order to meet with Moses atop a smoke-veiled mountain. When sin entered into the world, it could no longer sustain the presence of the perfection of power of a Holy God. Furthermore, this veil of cloud and smoke was for the protection of the people. For, however much the earth would tremble at the mere presence of God, the people would not be able to even approach God because of the sin that resides deep within them.

Yet, for however transcendent, however far off God may be in His Holiness, God is also coming close. God's immanent nature show us that He is a God who comes close to His people. The separation between God and man is not sufficient for the relationship that God desires with His people. It is God who wants to draw near to His people and draw them to Himself. God craves the relationship with His special creation who bears His image. The immanence of God is a blessing and a gift in that He would stoop down to our level in order to raise us up to His. This is the blessing of God's salvation. We encounter the richness and fullness of God because it is God who seeks to find and save us first.

We have an unapproachable God who bids us to approach Him with confidence. We have an unknowable God who reveals Himself to us in order that we might know Him. For however other worldly and far off that God may be, it is God who made the first move to reveal Himself to His people. Moses did not command God to meet him on Mount Sinai, rather it was God who came down in glorious thunder in order to meet with Moses face-to-face. Furthermore, it was not for a reprimanding for a (deserved) grumbling people who had seen the provision of God yet balked at its sustenance. No, it was out of the depth of love for His people to guide and protect them and pave a path to their salvation. God is a God of self-revelation, and that self-revelation is fueled by His very nature—love.

This self-revelation of God to His people only serves as a foreshadowing of Jesus and later the Holy Spirit. At this point, when God revealed himself to the people, it was under the auspices of the cloud engulfing the mountain. This was not, on His part, to withhold Himself, but to save the people of Israel. Yet, as Christ came and later sent the Holy Spirit, the barrier between God and man was lifted. God not only revealed himself in the form of man, but He did so unhindered and more approachable, and now more than ever.

The Blessing of The Law

It had been three days of preparation. The pieces had been moving, the people were in a constant state of purifying themselves to the best of their ability. The Lord had spoken through Moses and commanded the people to consecrate themselves for the coming of God. The transcendent God coming in his immanence would alter the course of human history for all time. The world groaned with the coming of a righteous and holy presence which thundered down. After three days of preparation by the people of Israel, God met with Moses at the summit of Mount Sinai. And the mighty and powerful God spoke...

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery...” ([Exodus 20:2, NIV](#))

The next few verses would become affectionately referred to as the Ten Commandments. They would be memorized by children and adults alike. People would make monuments out of them and they would become a sign of the holiness and moral code of God. Yet, this predicates each and every command of God given. God



did not lead with an indictment against a rebellious and cantankerous people, but instead lead with the reminder of who He was. He was their Lord. He was their Savior. God had been there for them in the past, He stood before them now, and He would continue to be there for them in the future.

We do not have any gods before Him, because He is the one true God who saved us. We would not diminish the name of God because He is exalted over all names. As His people, we would not need idols because the transcendent God has made Himself immanent. God commanded a Sabbath for *our* benefit, as He is our protector and guide. We would honor our mother and father because it displays our relationship to our Heavenly Father who wishes nothing but our own protection. Murder. Adultery. Stealing. Lying. Coveting. All of these stood in stark contrast to the will and nature of a God who led His people by His power and might. He is the Lord our God.

We may tend to view the law as restrictive, but when viewed through the lens of God's self-revelation, it is anything but restrictive. God, time and time again, has mightily displayed His full power for the sake of protecting His people. When the commands are given, they are not given as a punishment for the people but as a means of setting them free. God's mission throughout the course of human history is to save and redeem His people from themselves, and the law is no exception to that. It is sin that binds us; and the law, the direct revelation of the will of God, shows us when we are not in line and when we are not following our Lord.

Following Jesus Christ and the standards of perfection set by Him is not the thing that saves us. It is God and God alone who saves us by grace and grace alone. The law, for however difficult it may be, places the barriers around the things that destroy us. Living a righteous life does not lead to one's salvation but rather springs forth from it. It is the answer to our prayer: "God reveal your will." In a supreme act of grace for His people, God gave us His word and Holy standard and by His might; and because of how He has pulled us out of the grips of death, we will follow Him.

God is our Lord revealed to us.

Discussion Questions

Read [Exodus 19-20](#)

1. What does it mean that God is transcendent? What does this reveal about His nature and person? How does this display the holiness of God?
2. What does it mean that God is immanent? How does God's immanence reveal the feelings He has for His people and the mission He is looking to accomplish during human history?
3. What is usually our first instinct to being told we have to do or cannot do something? How do we respond to authority in our life and why?
4. What is the foundation of the law? What is the purpose of giving the law to the people of Israel? In which ways does understanding this purpose help us to obey the law?
5. Often times, disobedience can be a result of not trusting in the authority from which the law was given. What assurance and reminders did God give to the Israelites? Where in your life have you received the assurance of God? How did this impact your ability to follow God?
6. How does the fact that God is giving us a greater understanding of the things of His heart help us to see Him in the world we live in every day? How do we apply the word of God in our daily living?



7. Where in our lives do we encounter the most trouble in looking to obey God? How can we keep God in the forefront of our minds when we run into trouble following His will?
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About the Author.

Pastor Daniel Burton lives in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. In May 2015, Daniel graduated from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with his Master of Divinity. It was here that he began to explore his passion for Theology and deeper exploration of the word of God. Daniel believes that, at its core, Theology should be fun. Check out more of his work at <http://thegospeloutpost.com>

