

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:

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10/21/07

Exodus 19:10-24 “Are You Prepared to Meet God?”

Intro. Hebrews 9:27 says, “...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” Some day you are going to meet God. It could be at the time you die. It could be when Jesus comes again. But one thing is for sure, you can’t avoid meeting God. Do you believe that you are you ready to meet God? I wonder what it is like to know that you are about to die. Imagine that you were one of the passengers on United Airlines Flight 93. The plane has been hijacked by terrorists. You & some other passengers have learned that other planes have been hijacked and have crashed into the twin towers in a suicide mission. Another has crashed into the Pentagon. You realize that your plane is heading for the same fate. No matter what happens, you are most likely going to die. You know you are about to meet God in eternity. What would you do? Would you be ready?

Well in the Exodus story, 3 months after leaving Egypt, it was time for Israel to meet their God while they were still very much alive. They had seen Him work to deliver them from Egyptian bondage, but they had not yet reached the destination of the place where they would meet their God and Savior. So they traveled through the desert to Mt. Sinai to meet God. There, they would do something that no other nation has ever done—meet their heavenly King and listen to His voice. But if they did not follow the right procedure, the consequences would be very serious, including instant death.

In Amos 4:12 God said, “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!” Now based on this text & other Scriptures, I want to answer the question, “How should you prepare to meet God?” Approaching God is a serious matter. This is why it must be done only on God’s terms. Even the Israelites, whom God has just delivered from Egypt, whom God calls his “son,” cannot simply walk up to Him as they please. There are certain steps that must be followed. I will attempt to explain the steps Israel took, and apply them to us today. First, you should:

I. RECOGNIZE THE NATURE OF GOD

Before you meet someone, it is helpful to know something about that person. Otherwise, you may say or do something that would offend them without even realizing it. So you need to know what this text teaches us about God before you meet Him. First of all:

A. God Is Holy – The foundational concept underlying the holiness of God is that of separation. And this concept was underscored by the fact that even though God came down to the top of Mt. Sinai, He set boundaries separating Him from the people. For example, in v.12 we read, “You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, ‘Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.’” (Cf. v.23). So Moses put up barriers to keep the people at a distance. People tend to be curious, and some would want to come up the mountain to try to get a glimpse of God. So God said in v.21, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the LORD, and many of them perish.” The emphasis was always “Keep Your Distance!” The fact that limits are placed around the mountain accents the holiness of God.

The worship of the tabernacle and temple also emphasized the holiness of God. There was a barrier, a veil, between the Holy of Holies, and the holy place. Only the High Priest could cross the veil only 1 time/year, and only with the blood of atonement. Only priests could enter the holy place of the tabernacle & temple. The lay people could not cross the first veil. Every time they went to worship they could see a vivid picture of the fact that God is holy, separate from sinner.

Imagine trying to get in to meet the President. If you go to the White House, and give it a try, what will you find? The house is surrounded by walls and gates. You can't just walk up in street clothes and get in to see the President. The way is barred. You must wait on an invitation. Then, in the unlikely event that you get one, you must pass a screening process, then prepare yourself by dressing properly, and then wait until the President is ready to receive you.

Do you have a better sense of the concept of the holiness of God?
Another truth about God from our text is this:

B. God Is Great & Powerful – Look at how God manifested Himself in v.16, “Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud.” Furthermore, we read in the last of v.18, “the whole mountain quaked greatly.” The cloud and darkness, the thunder and lightning, and the earthquake all manifested the great power of God. In fact, in recounting this experience, Moses said in Dt. 5:24, “Surely the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness....” And don't think this is purely an Old Testament picture of God. In Rev. 4:5 John saw the throne of God in heaven and said, “And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices.”

Such a view of God's majesty is the crying need of our day. The strongest among us is but a broken reed compared to God.

The manifestation of God in Ex. 19 reveals more about God. We also see that:

C. God Is Wrathful toward Sin – We read in v.18, “Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace....” Dt. 4:11-12 recounts this experience. There Moses says, “Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness. And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice.” Fire and smoke usually is associated with the wrath of God. Ps. 74:1 says, “Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?” Heb. 12:29 says that our God is a consuming fire. Hell is pictured as a place of burning fire. So when the people saw the burning fire and smoke on the mountain, they were reminded that God's holy wrath burns against sin.

When you know the truth about the fire of God's wrath, will you hold on to your sin? Will you dare persist in doing something you know is wrong? God is not someone to be trifled with.

Fire is also symbolic of another truth about the nature of God:

D. God Is Jealous – Ex. 20:5 says, “For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God....” Deut. 4:24 says, “For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” Ps. 79:5 says,

“How long, LORD? Will You be angry forever? Will Your jealousy burn like fire?”¹ While in Egypt many in Israel worshipped other gods, and the Lord their God was burning with jealousy. And as we shall see from Exodus 32, idolatry was still in many of their hearts.

God is the One who created you. God is the One who sent His Son to save you. He deserves your loyal devotion. Yet many seek the favor of the world more than the favor of God. Many love money more than God. Many follow after their worldly pleasures, and forsake the God of their salvation. These things make God jealous, and He burns with a righteous jealousy.

In light of the nature of God, before we meet God we should take the next step mentioned in our text:

II. REVERE GOD

One purpose of the way God manifested Himself was to strike fear in the hearts of the Israelites. It was pretty effective! We read in v.16, “Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.” If you have ever been trapped outside in an open area during a strong thunderstorm, you know that Israel’s reaction is understandable. There was something else that struck fear in the hearts of the people. In the last of v.18 we read that “the whole mountain quaked greatly.” Have you ever felt a major earthquake? Even Moses trembled with fear (Heb. 12:21). I would too!

Even so, we should fear the Lord today. Prov. 1:7 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” One main purpose of instilling this fear within us is that we might be motivated not to sin against the Lord our God. Turn to Ex. 20:20. There we read Moses say, “Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.” On the one hand we should not be *terrified* of God, but we should have a healthy fear of God in the sense of being reverent toward Him. We should be concerned of the consequences of sinning against our God, who is holy. So as Php. 2:12 says, let us “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.” Let it not be forgotten that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament is one and the same. We fear His displeasure. In light of all that God has done for us, we don’t want to bring sorrow to His heart by our sin.

So we need to avoid the “God is your pal” approach to the Christian life. Do you come to church without the awesome sense that we are coming to worship the holy, mighty God? Exodus 19 is a clear reminder that the God we meet with regularly in worship is the Creator of everything. He is holy & pure. He is all-powerful & all-knowing. You can’t hide any sin from Him. He is indeed a loving Savior. He said in v.4, “I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.” But He is also someone to be feared.

A lack of fear of God what is wrong with our society today. Paul said in Rom. 3:18 of the ungodly pagans of the past, “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” As we have removed God, prayer, & the Bible from our public schools and from many other areas of public life, we have seen an increase in crime, immorality, profanity, and drug and alcohol abuse. We even see all that is good and pure and holy mocked on TV & the movies.

So we have seen so far that God is holy, powerful, and the fire of His wrath burns against sin. We should indeed fear Him. Now this creates a major problem for us. After all, we are

¹ Likewise, Zep. 1:18 says, “Neither their silver nor their gold Shall be able to deliver them In the day of the LORD’S wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured By the fire of His jealousy....” Zep. 3:8 says, “All the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy.”

sinners, and we live in an increasingly sinful society. Likewise, Israel had certainly manifested their sinful, rebellious nature many times. And if there was any doubt about the sinfulness of man, those doubts should have been put to rest after God gave His Ten Commandments, and the Covenant of the Law. In spite of their best intentions, Israel sinned grievously against God within 40 days, and throughout their history. Try as we may, we cannot keep all the commandments of God, and live a holy life. So on the one hand we have in Exodus 19 a picture of the holy and jealous God, wrathful toward sin, and on the other hand we have sinful man. This was vividly brought out in the way the people were kept from going up the mountain where God was. Barriers were set up to keep a proper distance between the holy God and sinful man. This whole experience at Sinai couldn't help but impress the people with their own sinfulness and God's majestic holiness.

So how can sinful man meet a holy God and live? How can sinful man have a relationship with such a holy God? Well this leads to the remaining steps in our preparation to meet God.

III. RECOGNIZE YOUR NEED FOR A MEDIATOR

The people quickly recognized their need of a Mediator. In Ex. 20:18-19 we read, "Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, 'You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.'" God is so great, so holy, so pure, we sinful creatures have no hope of bridging the gap between God and man on our own. It's like trying to swim across the Atlantic Ocean. We need a Mediator! The gap between a holy God and sinful man is too great. A mediator is needed to bridge the gap.

In this story it is clear that Moses became the mediator between God and man. As a result, God did not speak directly to the people. He only spoke to them through Moses. Look at vv.19-20, "And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. Then the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up." In the previous context of vv.3-9, we see that God spoke to Moses, and Moses spoke to the people. Then the people replied to Moses, and then Moses told God what the people said. He clearly fulfilled the role of the mediator.

The Mediator role was also fulfilled later by the High Priest. He approached God on behalf of the people with the blood of the atonement.

I have good news. You and I have a Mediator today. Who is that Mediator? 1 Tim. 2:5 says, "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." In Heb. 12:24 Jesus is called "the Mediator of the new covenant." Jesus is a better Mediator than Moses. John 1:14 says, "And the Word [Jesus] became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:18 says, "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." Jesus fully represents & reveals God, because He is God's Son. He also fully represents man, because He was born of a woman. He is the God-man. He is our Mediator.

Because Jesus is our Mediator, we fear God, but we are not terrified of Him like Israel was. This is brought out well in Heb. 12:18-24. Turn there with me. "For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and

tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: ‘And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.’ And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.’)

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.” We do not fear in the same way as Israel because we Christians have arrived at another mountain, not Mount Sinai but Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem. Though Israel was kept away from God, we have been given access to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The factor that makes the difference between the New Testament saint and the Old Testament saint is the work of Christ. This is not to say that we enter into His intimate presence casually, without reverence. But it does mean that, since the death and resurrection of Christ, we enter into that presence with a degree of joy, thanksgiving, and confidence, which were wholly lacking in Exodus 19. Because of our union with Christ, we no longer live under a dark cloud of judgment all the time, afraid that God is going to zap us at any moment. Our acceptance with God is not based upon our works, but upon the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Aren’t you glad that Christ is our Mediator? He has bridged the gap by His precious blood. Have you come to Him? Have you believed in Him? He said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Now since God is holy, and since He has provided a better Mediator than Moses, make sure you have taken the next step:

IV. RESPOND TO THE CALL OF GOD

The Israelites could not approach God any time they wanted. They had to wait for God’s invitation to approach, as given by the sound of the trumpet. In the last of v.13 we read, “When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain.” When don’t know if God Himself sounded the trumpet, or if an angel did so (cf. Dt. 33:2). But based on the sheer volume of the trumpet, I believe either God or an angels sounded the trumpet.

God is still calling out to men today, not with a trumpet, but by the Word of God, and by His Spirit. This idea is stated in 1 Thess. 1:8, “For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth...” By His Word Christ invites you to come to Him. He said in Mt. 11:28, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He said in Mt. 19:14, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Will you respond to the call of God? Will you come to Christ? Do you sense that the Spirit of God is calling you to be saved today?

The blast of the trumpet not only signaled an invitation to approach the mountain of God, but it also announced the coming of the Lord God. Both purposes will be fulfilled when Jesus comes again. In Mt. 24:31 we see that the trumpet will sound when Jesus comes again, and that trumpet sound will signal God’s invitation to the saints on earth that it is time to be gathered to meet their King. Likewise, in 1 Thess. 4:16-17 we read that the Lord will “descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the

clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” Some day the trumpet will sound, and believers will be invited to come up to meet the Lord in the air. Will you be among those who will rise to meet Jesus? You will do so only if you are ready to meet God. Are you ready? Have you taken the steps that I have shared with you today? Have you turned to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant?

Well, once you have responded to the call & believed in Jesus, you need to take one final step to be ready to meet God. You should:

V. CONSECRATE YOURSELVES BEFORE GOD

We have seen from our text that God is holy. One primary application of the doctrine of the holiness of God is stated in Lev. 11:44, “For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy.” The later statement is repeated 5 more times in Scripture (Lev. 11:45; 19:2; 20:7, 26), including one quotation in the New Testament (1 Pet. 1:16). One of the most fundamental truths of the Bible is the fact that we are to be like God. He is holy, so we should be holy. Yet in a [February 20] 2006 Barna survey, barely one-third of Americans (35%) agree that “God expects you to become holy.” Only 46% of the born again public believes God has called them to holiness [Illus.#C-1499]. Something is very lacking in our concept of the holiness of God, and our own need to be holy. So let’s learn more from our text about this matter of personal holiness.

God told Israel in v.6 that they were to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” In v.10 we read, “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes.’” Likewise, in vv.14-15 we read, “So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. And he said to the people, ‘Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives.’”² Finally, in v.22 we read, “Also let the priests who come near the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD break out against them.”³ It is clear that the people had to acknowledge their need to take steps that would recognize the holiness of God, and their own need to set themselves apart. In fact, the words translated “consecrate” and “sanctified” are both based on the Hebrew word for “holy.” Moses was previously instructed to take the sandals off his feet as a gesture recognizing the holiness of God (3:5). It is clear that in order to approach the Lord, the people first had to consecrate themselves. They had to set themselves apart from sin and even ordinary daily routine in order to worship the Lord, and dedicate themselves to Him.

The people were instructed to consecrate themselves first by washing their clothes. How plainly this intimated that God would draw nigh only to a people who were clean—that it is sin which separates the Creator from His creatures.

I believe it is a good idea to apply the same teaching to us today. When you come to church you are to meet God in worship. In recognition of that, you should consecrate yourself. Take a bath. When I was just a boy, I took a bath every Saturday night whether I needed it or not! Why? Why was Saturday night my primary bath night? It was because we were going to church on Sunday. Then wear clean clothes. If you are able, I believe it is a good idea to dress up

² This last command was unique in Scripture. Heb. 13:4 makes it clear that there is nothing at all sinful about marital relations. They were probably told to avoid intimate relations with their wives to ensure that they avoid the kind of ceremonial defilement that would be described later in Lev. 15:18.

³ Since the Aaronic priests were not yet consecrated (chapter 28), these were probably men who had been appointed to serve as priests based on some other unknown basis.

a bit. Show God that you think He is important, and that church is a special place. When you come strolling into church in shorts, what are you saying?

The spiritual application is even more important. Washing and changing clothes is the Old Testament is a picture of what we read in 2 Corinthians 7:1, where Paul says, “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” As a separate people belonging to God, we should never shy away from being mindful of the things we ought and ought not to do. Cleanse yourself of known sin by repentance & confession of sin. Rely upon the Holy Spirit to help you overcome that sin. After all, the life of holiness and consecration cannot be achieved on our own. You will never be clothed in Christ’s holiness until you fall on your face before God’s throne and admit that you have no power in you to resist sin, and be holy. You can only become holy by union with Christ. Only God has the power to keep us holy.

Our behavior is the most visible means of distinguishing ourselves from those who do not know Christ. But living a separate, holy life does not mean we should completely isolate ourselves from unbelievers. Jesus said in Mt. 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” By living good, godly lives, we should the world that the Gospel does indeed change lives from the inside out.

Conclusion: If you visited the doctor and he ran some tests that revealed that you have 6 months to live, would you ready to meet God? Do you know God as He has revealed Himself, or is He a stranger to you? Do you know that God is holy, and His wrath burns against sin? Do you fear God? Have you accepted God’s call to believe in His Son Jesus Christ, the one true Mediator between God and man? Don’t settle for a false profession of faith. Make sure you faith is genuine. One test of true faith is living a holy, consecrated life. Has God changed you life? Heb. 12:14 says, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.”

I challenge each of you to make sure that you are ready to meet God. Make sure you have taken the steps that I have shared with you today. If not, take a few steps down the isle at the invitation, & I will lead you to prepare to meet your God!

Sources: Ronald A. Beers, ed., *Life Application Study Bible* (Tyndale House & Zondervan, 1991); Peter Enns, *The NIV Application Commentary: Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000); Stephen Felker, [*Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible*](#) (Col. Hgts, VA: Published by Author), 2007; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 1 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1981); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Exodus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972); Warren Wiersbe, *Be Delivered: Exodus* (Colorado Spring: Chariot Victor Books Publishing, 1998); David Wilkerson (notes from his sermon on this text dated April, 1982). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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