**The Gospel According to Moses**

**The Mountain of God**

**Exodus 19:7-15**

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David Taylor

We are working our way through the Old Testament book of Exodus in our series, the Gospel According Moses. We are in chapter 19:7-15, in my message entitled, The Mountain of God. Israel is camped at Mount Sinai and will be here for about a year.[[1]](#footnote-1) It is here that God makes his covenant with Israel and gives them his law. Last week we saw in 19:1-6, Israel’s covenant calling as priest kings. Today, in 19:7-15, God prepares Israel to meet with him on Mount Sinai. Next week we finish the chapter in 19:16-25 and see a remarkable manifestation of God’s presence on the mountain as he meets with Israel. My big idea is, approach God carefully not casually.

**God Condescends to Us**

The theme of Exodus is about the God who makes himself known. Our world needs to know who God is. Our culture has many ideas about God. Probably the most common understanding of God is that he is a God of love who gives me unconditional acceptance. He says yes to my every want and desire with no condemnation. Yet none of us would accept anyone on those terms, whether it is friendship or marriage. Any attempt to know God apart from the bible will be twisted because human sin distorts our view of God. It is like a group of blind men, each touching one part of an elephant and determining what it is.

This passage helps us understand who God is and how we are to approach him. God condescends to be near to us and we must approach him carefully. First, we can only know God because he condescends to us. I don’t mean when someone patronizing or look down on others. Miriam Webster tells us that the verb literally means to go down or to willingly lower oneself to another’s level below their own self-importance, as are still encountered in writings on the Bible.[[2]](#footnote-2) That is how I am using the word. I do this when I get on my hands and knees and play with my grandchildren. God condescends to come near to us, lowering himself to our level which is far below him.

We see God condescend to us in at least two ways in this passage. First, God condescends by speaking to us. He does this by speaking to Moses who speaks to Israel. God speaks to us so we can know him and follow him. Do you ever think of God condescending to speak to you at all, let alone giving you his word so you can know him? We know who God is because he has spoken to us through his Son (Heb 1:1-2). We speak the gospel to others because that is the only way they can know God. We know who God is because he condescended to us.

We also see God condescends to us by confirming Moses’ leadership. The people questioned Moses’ leadership from the beginning. It started in Egypt and continued into the wilderness. So, God speaks to Moses so Israel can hear him speaking from the cloud so they would believe Moses is God’s shepherd and spokesman (8-9). God is saying, Moses is my chosen shepherd and spokesman, listen to him. God still condescends to speak through his shepherd leaders the word of God to the people of God. If you are looking for a church, look for one which puts the word of God central to the worship of God. God condescends to us by confirming his shepherd leaders.

**Approach God Carefully**

We must be careful in our approach to God. All of us take God too casually. By casual I don’t mean informal, as in the clothes we wear to church but in our attitude in approaching God. It is the difference between being flippant versus reverent or nonchalant versus devout. God condescends to come near to us but we must not approach him casually(Ps 24:3-4).

The carefulness of approaching God can be seen three ways in this passage. First, God shows up in a cloud. God speaks to us so we can who he is but he is invisible. We cannot fully see him and live. We can apprehend God but never fully comprehend him. The second is the distance, the boundary line that cannot be crossed, keeping Israel separated from God (12-13). Sin separates us from God. The third is the most weighty, death for ignoring God’s warning. To cross that line and touch the mountain means death. That should make us stop and pause, approach God carefully. Death by execution, stoning or shooting with an arrow. No mercy for those who are careless or irreverent in approaching a holy God. I know some of you are probably thinking, that is not the God I believe in, too harsh and barbaric. This is meant to jar us. Are you letting the Bible shape your view of reality or are letting culture shape it. Every one of us here in some measure underestimates the holiness of God. He is not to be trifled with. God is holy and we are sinful; we do not just trounce up to him. The cloud keeps God at a safe distance and the boundary line shows us that our sin separates us from God. Israel must consecrate and wash themselves, a symbolic purification in preparation to meet with God.

God condescended again by clothing himself in the frailties of humanity, in the person of Jesus Christ. The Eternal Son of God condescended to become one of us to a strike death blow to the sin that separates us from God. He condescended to take our sin upon himself on the cross. So we can come into the very presence of God, very throne of God with confidence and assurance, safe in the arms of Jesus. God Condescends to us but that does not mean we can approach him casually or carelessly.

Life Group Questions:

1. What does it mean that God condescends to be near to us?
2. In what ways does the passage describe God condescending to us?
3. What is the difference between being casual and careful in approaching God?
4. Do we approach God like being in a living room or a throne room?
5. What does this tell us about God?
6. How does this passage make you feel toward God?
7. What word best describes your relationship with God, casual or careful?
8. How does it make you feel to realize that the God of the universe condescends to be near you?
9. How is God asking me to respond?
10. How should I approach God differently based on this passage?

1. Israel will be camped here for about a year. They came to Mount Sinai on the third new moon (1), the third month after they left Egypt. Numbers tells us that Israel left Sinai in the second year, on the twentieth of the second month (10:11). So they left a year later at the end of the second month. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/condescending. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)