



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V24 N24

June 12, 2022

WAY OUT

“Meeting God Face to Face”

Exodus 19:7-25

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Worship

I worship God for who he is and what he has done for me .

“Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.”

Psalms 95:6-7



What do we learn about God from his appearance on Sinai?

The Lord God deserves our worship because he is holy. “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory,” cry the seraphim one to another in God’s presence (Isa 6:3). Elsewhere, other scriptures make it clear that his holiness summons humanity’s praise and worship. One psalmist tells Israel to “Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy” (99:5), and in the same psalm, he declares that the nations are to praise Yahweh’s great and awesome name for the same reason, because “he is holy” (Ps 99:3). Other psalmists repeatedly exhort their readers to “praise his holy name” (cf. 30:4; 97:12; 103:1; 145:21). One theologian writes: “Proper reaction to God’s holiness, his separateness, is one of awe, reverence, and silence. ‘Let them praise thy great and terrible name! Holy is he!’ (Ps. 99:3)” (Millard J. Erickson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:284-85).

Now it’s important to understand the meaning of the term *holy*. Holiness is not one attribute among God’s many attributes; holiness is the sum total of all of his attributes. To say that God is “holy” is to say that he is unique, one of a kind; it is to say that there is no thing and no one like him. This is why God commands, “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on earth below or in the waters below” (Ex 20:4). Images distort his true likeness because he is unlike anything or anyone else. He is set apart, distinct, wholly other. His non-moral *omni*- attributes—omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence—contribute to his holiness. His moral attributes, perfections that he possesses absolutely—e.g., righteousness, love, grace, mercy, goodness, truth—also contribute to his holiness. Not to mention, he is the Creator of the universe. In other words, he is set apart by his attributes, and yet, he is greater than the sum of his attributes. He is holy!

God’s holiness is evident in the theophany in Exodus 19:16-19, containing a description of the elements of nature in commotion. There is one and

only one Creator, and on Mount Sinai, the LORD manifests his holiness to Moses and the Israelites using the forces of nature. His revelation is an attack on their physical senses. The people *see* the lightning and the thick cloud. They *hear* the thunder and the loud trumpet blast. They *smell* the blinding smoke that billows up from Sinai and *feel* the whole mountain tremble violently. The storm theophany is undeniably a tangible, palpable revelation of God’s presence. One commentator writes: “The cloud that had led the people through the wilderness now appeared to rest on Mount Sinai. It was dark with smoke and foreboding, filled with fire, and accompanied by loud bursts of thunder. Mysteriously, amid the tumult, the blasts of trumpets could also be heard, growing louder every moment (v. 16). The mountain where God had come as an inferno. This display of God’s power was not lost on any of the people. There was great fear among them.” This display of God’s holiness in unique power has a desired effect. “As Moses explained it, ‘God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.’ (20:20). Later he again warned the people, ‘Be careful not to forget the covenant. . . . For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God’ (Dt 4:23-24)” (John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 282).

Theophany is just one way God revealed himself to people in ancient times. He has a better way now—through his incarnate Son—about whom the author of the book of Hebrews writes: “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word” (1:1-3a). Commenting on verse 3, one writer explains: “By analogy to see the Son is to view God’s glory or manifest presence. So as the ‘radiance of his glory’ the Son is the manifestation of the person and presence of God . . . and what the Son represents is the ‘being’ of the Father, that is, his essential nature” (George H. Guthrie, *The NIV Application Commentary: Hebrews*, 49), which explains why the Son is to receive worship.

Read Exodus 19:7-25

7 So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak. 8 The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD.

9 The LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you." Then Moses told the LORD what the people had said.

10 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes 11 and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12 Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, 'Be careful that you do not approach the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain is to be put to death. 13 They are to be stoned or shot with arrows; not a hand is to be laid on them. No person or animal shall be permitted to live.' Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they approach the mountain."

14 After Moses had gone down the mountain to the people, he consecrated them, and they washed their clothes. 15 Then he said to the people, "Prepare yourselves for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations."

16 On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. 17 Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. 19 As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

20 The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up 21 and the LORD said to him, "Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish. 22 Even the priests, who approach the LORD, must consecrate themselves, or the LORD will break out against them."

23 Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, 'Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy.'"

24 The LORD replied, "Go down and bring Aaron up with you. But the priests and the people must not force their way through to come up to the LORD, or he will break out against them."

25 So Moses went down to the people and told them.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline the people's answer in v. 8.
- Box "so that" indicating purpose in v. 9.
- Circle "consecrate/d" in vv. 10, 14.
- Underline "wash their clothes" in v. 10.
- Box "because" indicating reason in v. 11.
- Circle "touch" in v. 12.
- Circle "Abstain" in v. 15.
- Highlight vv. 16, 18-19.
- Circle "priests" in v. 22.
- Double underline "break out" in vv. 22, 24.
- Circle "holy" in v. 23.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. "So" implies a link to verses 3-6. What did the LORD command him to tell the Israelites?
 2. Explain the *significance* of the people's response (v. 8) with respect to the LORD's covenant (v. 5).
 3. Explain *why* hearing God speak to Moses will influence *how* the people view Moses.
 4. How are the people to prepare for the coming appearance of the LORD on Sinai and what do you make of their preparations?
 5. Initial word of the LORD's appearance comes with stern warnings and severe penalties. *How* so and *why* so?
 6. The theophany (vv. 16-19) clearly results in *sensory overload*. Explain *why* and *what* you infer from it.
 7. On Moses' *third* trip up Sinai (cf. vv. 3, 7; 8, 14; 20, 25), God commands Moses again to warn the people against encroaching on the mountain. *Who* might do that and *why*?
 8. God "will *break out* against them" (vv. 22, 24) describes the threat disobedience poses. Explain what that means.
 9. Regarding Sinai, God tells Moses to "set it apart as *holy*" (v. 23). Explain what that means.
 10. **Discussion:** Talk about the first *Living Question*, "What does this passage teach me about God?"
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Commentary On The Text

Exodus 19 marks the arrival of the Israelites at Mount Sinai where they remained during the events recorded in Exodus 19:1 through Numbers 10:10. “They were at Sinai 11 months and 6 days—from the 15th day of the third month of their first year of travels (cf. Ex. 12:2, 6, with 19:1) to ‘the 20th day of the second month of the second year’ of their travels (Num. 10:11). There Moses received from God the Law with its many instructions for worship by the redeemed people” (John D. Hannah, “Exodus,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 137). Verses 7-15 of chapter 19 describe preparations to be made for the LORD’s appearance on Sinai, and verses 16-25 describe the theophany marking that appearance immediately prior to making the covenant.

God promised to make Abraham into a great nation (Ge 12:3). And to become a nation, Abraham needed countless descendants (Ge 15:5), and his descendants needed a land (Ex 3:8, 17; 6:4, 8; 13:5, 11) as well as a constitution, to wit, the Mosaic Covenant (19:5-6)—which is a *conditional* covenant unlike the *unconditional* Abrahamic covenant. One writer explains: “There were two basic types of formal covenants in the ancient Near East: parity (between equals) and suzerainty (between a sovereign and his subjects). The Mosaic Covenant was a suzerainty treaty. Such agreements characteristically contained a preamble (v. 3), historical prologue (v. 4), statement of general principles (v. 5a), *consequences of obedience* (vv. 5b-6a), and *consequences of disobedience* (omitted here)” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Exodus,” 2022 ed., 178, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/exodus.pdf).

Suzerainty treaties are by definition *conditional* in that they stipulate the benefits for *complying with* the terms of the covenant and the penalties for *breaching* those terms. On Sinai, the LORD tells Moses of his intention to establish a covenant with his people (v. 5-6). Moses, then, goes down the mountain and relays the LORD’s words to elders (v. 7), and unanimously the people favorably respond to becoming “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (v. 8; cf. v. 6). Overestimating their ability to do so, they tell Moses to tell God, “We will do everything the LORD has said” (v. 8).

In verses 9-15, God announces that he will “come down” and appear to the people on the third day. In the meantime, they are to prepare over the next two days for his coming. *Moses* is to “consecrate” them, that is, set them apart in anticipation of them becoming “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (v. 8)—

which he does (v. 14). *How* he does this is not specified; perhaps it involved the offering of a sacrifice. *The people* are to wash their clothes, something they would not regularly do, given the availability of water, suggesting something momentous lay in store for them. Not only that, but they are also to abstain from sexual relations, again marking a break in their routines, likewise suggesting something **MOMENTOUS** is about to occur. These preparations serve to whet their appetite and to heighten their anticipation for what God is going to do. The prescribed preparations come with stern warnings. Limits are to be put around the mountain, so that no one aimlessly wanders onto its slopes, because anyone who put a foot on it before Moses leads the people out of the camp to the foot of the mountain is to be put to death. God is not to be approached casually on human terms; anyone who does faces the severest of penalties, fitting the magnitude the crime.

In verses 16-25, God’s arrival on the top of Sinai, signaled by the long, growing louder blast of the ram’s horn, causes a commotion in the elements of nature, resulting in sensory overload. Mere words do not do the scene justice. “God demonstrated His holiness and awesomeness; little wonder that the people **trembled**, standing **at the foot of the mountain** (v. 16; cf. 20:18). The people heard crashing **thunder** and **a very loud trumpet blast** (cf. 19:13); they saw flashing **lightning**. . . **fire**, and dense billowing **smoke** as **from a smelting furnace**; and they felt the **mountain** trembling in a violent earthquake. The ‘black cloud’ of smoke brought ‘darkness’ to the sky (Deut. 4:11; cf. Ex. 20:21)” (Hannah, 138). God calls Moses to the top and doubles down on his previous warning, “Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish” (v. 21; cf. vv. 12-13)—the priests are no exception. When Moses protests that the people have already been told this, again the LORD warns against people forcing their way through the masses to “come up to the LORD” (v. 24). Otherwise, the LORD “will break out against them,” that is, they will perish. Sinai is holy as long as Yahweh is present there; people are to keep their distance.

This *upper* story of this passage is about the Creator God’s awesome holiness, revealed in how the elements of nature responded to his presence in the theophany recorded in Exodus 19:16-19. The *lower* story is about the proper response of his people to him. They are neither to treat him casually nor to approach him carelessly. Coming into his presence can only be on his terms.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 8 ***We will do . . .*** “It was not merely the elders who agreed to enter into covenant with Yahweh. All the people did so, suggesting that the elders brought Moses’ words throughout the congregation of Israel, required a response from everyone, and then brought the unanimously positive response back to Moses, who then brought it back up the mountain to God in preparation for actually saying the words in God’s hearing . . . The formality of the process kept the people reminded that they were not dealing only with their elders or Moses or both but with the universe’s only God, who was not approachable by just anyone, who was greater and more dangerous than any force they had ever otherwise known, and who was requiring of them in a patient, condensed process their assent to the most important commitment they could make” (Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC, 424-25).

v. 10 ***consecrate*** Moses consecrated them (v. 14), that is, set them apart to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (v. 6). How he consecrated them is not specified; perhaps it involved the offering of a sacrifice (cf. 13:2, 12); they washed their own clothes. Or perhaps, “This sanctification would be accomplished by abstaining from things that would make them defiled or unclean, and then by ritual washings and ablutions” (*The NET Bible*, 21^{tn} on Ex 19:10).

v. 10 ***wash their clothes*** The exact significance of washing clothes is not specified. In any case, the Israelites cannot simply come as they are into God’s presence. They must prepare *spiritually* and *physically*. Since clothes washing is not something done frequently, perhaps it’s no more than a sign of respect, marking a change in routine before a momentous occasion.

v. 12 ***touch*** Cf. 3:5. “God desired in this way to teach his people the seriousness of dealing with him . . . One way to teach this to the Israelites so they would not foolishly think he was a human-conceived god like an idol—who could be handled or kissed or otherwise manipulated physically or approached casually—was to restrict access even to the mountain that God would touch in his theophany and to the ‘contagion’ of touching anyone who had in fact touched the mountain. If a king required approaching with the greatest of care, should not the King of Kings be honored even more carefully and respectfully? The boundary markers (‘limits’) place around the base of the mountain served to prevent people in their daily course of grazing flocks and gathering manna and the like from straying thoughtlessly onto the actual edge (‘foot’) of the mountain” (Stuart, 426-27).

v. 15 ***Abstain*** Cf. 1Co 7:5. “The temporary prohibition against normal sexual relations (‘do not go near a woman,’ v. 15) seems intended to impress the importance of this occasion on the Israelites and to help them concentrate on it. We should not infer from this command that a married couple’s normal sexual relations are sinful (cf. Gen. 1:28; 9:1, 7)” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Exodus,” 2022 ed., 177-78, plano-biblechuch.org/tcon/notes/pdf/exodus.pdf). There “are special occasions of prayerful preparation and worshipful activity that call for avoidance of the usual, nonsinful personal indulgences and demand special, focused, self-denying attention to God” (Stuart, 426).

v. 22 ***priests*** Cf. 13:1-2. Officially the priesthood is not established until chapter 28. “The priests referred to (vv. 22, 24) were evidently young men (firstborn?) who offered sacrifices before God appointed the Aaronic priests to this service (cf. 24:5)” (Constable, 178). On 13:1-2, one commentator writes: “The firstborn were set apart for the Lord because he had ‘passed over’ them in the destruction of the firstborn of Egypt. They thus belonged to him, and as was later seen with the Levites, they were to serve him in worship . . . The first born were to be set apart from ordinary affairs of life and given over to God’s service. They were evidently the priests mentioned in Exodus 19:22; 24:5” (Sailhamer, 266).

vv. 22, 24 ***breakout*** “The image of Yahweh breaking forth on them means ‘work destruction’ (see 2 Sam 6:8; S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 174)” (*The NET Bible*, 40^{tn} on Ex 19:22). “The threat that many would perish or that the Lord would ‘break out against them’ is the same threat: the possibility of death as a penalty for trying to force one’s way into God’s presence” (Stuart, 432).

v. 23 ***holy*** Cf. “consecrate it” (ESV); “set it apart” (NET); “sanctify it” (KJV). The mountain is made distinct from other locations because God is uniquely present there. Putting limits around it sets it apart by recognizing its uniqueness and limiting access.



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Because God's holiness is beyond comprehension, he is to be worshiped with reverence and awe on his own terms.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

When I was growing up, I was late to everything. Every. Single. Thing. Part of my tardiness was definitely my fault, but the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, if you know what I mean. My sweet mom was then and still is today, a late person. Her clock is super flexible and kind of melty like a Dali painting. Twenty-one years ago, my better half entered the picture. My husband is an army veteran with a general disposition of "on time is late." Boy, was that a transition! And honestly with five kids in the picture it sometimes still is. I remember hearing one of my Community Group mentors with seven kids talk about how she was raised getting ready for church and how she raised her kids to follow this model. It seems so simple that it's almost embarrassing. She got herself and all her kids prepared as much as possible the night before: shoes and clothes laid out, no scheduled late-night events, and a ready-made plan for breakfast. She knew that it was going to be a stretch to get her crew to church on time, so she prepared. So often we dive headlong into church without any preparation. We roll in on two wheels and hurry to find a place to sit that will fit the whole crew, likely in the dark because the music has already started. Then we wonder why we're so distracted and can't focus. What if, instead, we prepared in advance? Let's get ready! This week let's put the shoes by the door, plan breakfast, and most importantly, take a moment to prepare our hearts.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Exodus 19:7-25.

1. How did the people respond when Moses told them about God's proposal?
2. How were the people to get ready to meet with God?
3. How did God make Himself known to the people?

What Do You Think?

Why was not touching the mountain important to God?

What Do You Do?

Get ready! Each evening, think about what you need to do the next day and how you should prepare. How does being ready make your day easier?

CORE COMPETENCY: Worship

I celebrate God for who He is and what He has done for me.

MEMORY VERSE: Colossians 3:12

"Therefore as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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