

Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant

#36 God Said: Turn Northward

Heb. 12:18-25 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto 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 thrust through 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 written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven.

1. The author of Hebrews compares Israel's physical journey through the wilderness to our heavenly calling and pilgrimage.
2. This spiritual journey corresponds, in type, to each stage of Israel's pilgrimage from Mt. Sinai in the wilderness to Mt. Zion in the Promised Land.

Consider: We can learn valuable lessons about our spiritual journey and what it means to come to Mt. Zion.

1. Israel's progress was marked by using mountains and hills as milestones.
2. These milestones later commemorated certain truths and events.
Future generations would understand these truths when they came to a specific mountain or hill.

Note: To many this journey will be a radical call to leave the shadows of a "religion" that has ceased following the cloud of God's presence and travel to the heavenly Jerusalem.

Mt. Sinai & God's Eternal Purpose

1. Israel's deliverance from Egypt is a type of the believer's deliverance from this evil world and sin.
2. God miraculously parted the waters of the Red Sea and they witnessed the demise of the Egyptian forces whose mission was to bring them back into bondage.
3. Israel camped at Mt. Sinai while Moses ascended the mountain at God's instructions.
4. God delivered His message to Moses regarding Israel's calling, purpose and destiny as a nation.

Ex. 19:4-6 You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.

1. God revealed His eternal purpose for Israel. "I.. brought you to Myself."
2. You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.
3. Moses called for the elders and relayed all God's words to them.

Ex. 19:7-8 "All that Yahweh has spoken we will do." Moses reported the words of the people to God.

Key Point: God's relationship to Israel was strictly conducted through Moses, but this fell short of God's intention for His people. He desires intimacy, with each one coming before Him as part of His kingdom of priests.

- God's desire is to bring a people fully to Himself > Rev. 21:2-4
- John is watching the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. He heard a great voice:

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Consider: Can you imagine God personally wiping the tears from your eyes and removing the sorrow and suffering of former things?

God's Purposes For Israel:

1. Bring you to Myself
 - Since Adam & Eve fell, God's priority has been to reconcile man to Himself and restore that cool of the day communion.
2. You shall be God's treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.
 - Only those God has brought to Himself through a great redemptive work of His Holy Spirit can be the kingdom of priests and holy nation.
 - Only those God has brought into close union with Himself can be His priests and show forth His virtues.

God's 1st Order of Business at Sinai:

1. Draw a people unto Himself - invite them into His sanctifying presence so they could be an extension of His love to the rest of the world.

God had revealed His divine purpose to Abraham.

Gen. 22:18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

2. God began the process with Moses who exhibited the true function of the priesthood.

- Moses encountered God at the burning bush. He was sent as a prophet to lead a great exodus. This was a type of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. [Acts 3:22]
- Moses' greatness was due to his face-to-face relationship with God.

Deut. 34:10 "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face-to-face."

- Moses possessed an uncommon knowledge of the ways of God.

Ps. 103:7 He made known His ways [derek = manner, habit, way, moral character] unto Moses...

The heart of Moses as a priest and prophet was revealed in his intercession for the people.

1. The people demanded Aaron make them "gods who shall go before us." [Ex. 32:1]
2. Aaron melted their jewelry into a golden calf. The people were enthralled.
3. They threw Moses to the side and forgot the God who delivered them from Egypt.
4. They attributed God's mighty saving acts to the idol. [Ex. 32:1, 4; Ps. 106:19-23]

Ex. 32:30-32 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; perhaps I can make an atonement for your sin. ³¹ And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. ³² Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

1. Moses has the heart of the one Mediator between God and man, the Lord Jesus Christ. [I Tim. 2:5]
2. Men who have not come to a personal relationship with God cannot know His ways and cannot be priests unto Him and represent Him.

Consider: "Many run to conferences and seminars seeking a touch from God or some manifestation of His power. They study Acts and hope to replicate what happened when the Holy Spirit worked in the early church. Sadly, few know Him in a face-to-face reality because they are seeking His hands, but not His face."

Consider: The tendency to hide from God and man, becoming unaware and without an intimate knowledge of Him takes us right back to the fall of man. Gen. 3:7-8

1. "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked [Strong's #6174 & #5903]; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings... So he [Adam] said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.'"
2. The root word in the Hebrew that was translated naked
 - Strong's #6174 = ârôwm
 - And Strong's #5903 = 'êyrôm

Both are used in the description of man and his fall.

They both derive from the root verb:

âram [Strong's #6191] a primitive root which means subtle, shrewd, crafty, sly which significantly shares a primary syllable with 'ârah [Strong's #6168] = To Make Naked

Consider: After the fall, Adam and Eve were driven from the presence of God and lost their wonderful privilege of fellowship with Him.

Gen. 3:22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever:

- Man now knew GOOD AND EVIL. He became subtle, shrewd, crafty and cunning.
- Men hide their motives from their fellow man, never living openly and in truth because of the evil in their hearts.

We see this in Cain as he drew Abel out into the field and killed him, allowing the one who was a Liar and Murderer from the beginning to fully manifest himself in man for the first time.

Outside Eden they had to scrape out their living on ground that was now cursed by God. The gate to Eden looked as though it never would open again, that man would never get back into Eden. An angel of judgment with a flaming sword was there.

Truth: God desires to bring a people back into a face-to-face fellowship with Him so they can make His ways known in Spirit and in truth. God was seeking a holy nation and a kingdom of priests.

1. God told Moses to sanctify the people for 2 days; wash their clothes also. [Ex. 19:10]
People can be sanctified on the outside, but it takes God to sanctify them inwardly. God Himself who spoke this universe into existence was now coming to Mount Sinai to meet with Israel.

2. On day 3, God would come down on Mt. Sinai in the sight of the people.
3. Trumpet sound: They were to come up to the mountain but not touch it.
4. They followed God's instructions.
5. 3rd day: God descended on the Mount in fire. Billows of smoke ascended as though the whole mount was a furnace. The mountain shook violently. There was thunder, lightning, a thick cloud and the sound of a very loud trumpet.
6. ALL trembled as Moses led them out to meet God.
7. When the trumpet sound grew louder, Moses spoke and God answered.
8. God came down to the top of the mountain and called Moses up.
9. God uttered 10 points of law that would govern Israel's relationship with Him and others.
10. God instructed the people to draw near, but when they saw the lightning and smoke, heard the thunder, sound of the trumpet and voice of God, they drew back in fear and trembling and stayed at a distance.

Note: The Jewish people—every man, woman and child—had an encounter with God.

Deut. 4:32-33 For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?

11. Ex. 29:19 They said to Moses, "Speak with us yourself and we will listen: but don't let God speak with us, lest we die."

12. God is testing you. He will not kill you, but they drew back.

Ex. 20:21 "The people stayed at a distance and Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was."

What a contrast is this to the condition of soul that says with Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," or, with David, "Be not silent unto me, lest if Thou be silent unto me, I become like unto them that go down into the pit."

Ex. 24:9-13 "Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up; and they saw the God of Israel and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. ¹¹ And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

From there, Moses and Joshua his attendant went on up into the mountain of God."

Aaron the High Priest and Joshua, Moses' successor, who would eventually lead the children of Israel into the land of promise, both ascended the mountain of God with Moses. They must first see Him and know His ways before they could lead and have anything to bring to the people.

Key Point: The call to greatness is a call to come near to God. Only those who have a face-to-face relationship with Him, who know His name, can know His ways and be a holy priesthood unto Him.

1. Moses knew God face-to-face and knew God's ways.
2. The children of Israel drew back and knew only the acts of God. [Ps. 103:7b]
3. This filled the journey to Zion with constant conflict, bickering and complaining.

God said of that stubborn generation, "...for forty years...I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways'" [Hebrews 3:10] Ps. 119:67-68 Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

⁶⁸ Thou art good, and do good; teach me thy statutes.

Ps. 25:1-5 Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. ² O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. ⁴ Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. ⁵ Lead me in thy truth and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

Cause and Effect. They always go astray because they do not know His ways.

How much sin and confusion would disappear if God's people knew His ways!

A generation died in the wilderness because they refused to walk by faith and know His ways. Rather than sharing God's vision and purpose by drawing near to Him, they gave mindless and halfhearted obedience to superficial interpretations of the law. Because of this lack of vision and faith they were "as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle" (Psalms 32:9).

The Message Of Sinai was not just the law. All God's dealings with Israel, including the law, had this end in view. "I brought you to Myself... you will be my treasured possession; you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

I Pet. 2:9 "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"

- Praises: arete = a virtuous course of thought, feeling or action
- His priests are vessels of His nature, His virtues. Their thoughts are His thoughts.

Their feelings are His feelings. Their ways are His ways. Their actions are His actions.

Key: This is how we show forth His praise; by displaying His virtues, proclaiming Him in power. Only those who have been in His presence can mirror His glory.

Because of Moses' face-to-face encounter with God, his face shown so brightly that he had to cover it with a veil. Since Christ's death and resurrection, God has taken the veil away!

II Cor. 3:18 And "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, [even] as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Key: God's utmost desire is to deliver every individual out of bondage and bring him or her to Himself. Then begins the process of transforming His people, by His sanctifying presence, into a holy nation, a corporate kingdom of priests that will show His virtue to a lost and dying world.

Deuteronomy 2-3 tell of the journey upon leaving Kadesh-Barnea.

Deut. 2:3 "You have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward"
Have you ever felt that your wheels were spinning but you were going nowhere?

1. It seems that you are not making any true progress.

2. For ~38 years the children of Israel were circling the same mountain.

Finally God spoke to Moses and declared, "You have circled this mountain long enough."

It is time to move on.

Consider: There are many people who have never gone beyond the beginning stages of their Christian experience.

1. Paul bemoaned the spiritual immaturity of the Corinthian believers.

I Cor. 3:1-3 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, [even] as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for up to now you were not able [to bear it], nor are you yet able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas [there is] among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and still walking after the old nature?

- Many of the Corinthians had not developed a spiritual or mature mind.
- They were underdeveloped like babes. They could only bear the simple, rudimentary principles. [John 16:12; Heb. 5:12-14; I Pet. 2:2]
- The proof they were yet carnal was the existence of divisions in the church. [Envy, strife and division; I Cor. 1:11; 6:1-8; 11:38; Gal. 5:20; James 3:16]

"Things must be done to please them or you will hear a horrible wailing coming from the crib."

Heb. 5:12-14 For when the time came that you should be teaching others, you still have a need to be taught the first principles of the Christian faith. You can only handle milk and are not able to digest solid food. For every one that is only able to drink milk [is] still a baby and is not skilled in his understanding of the word...

Solid food is for those who are mature, those who have enough sense to discern good and evil.

Heb. 6:1 Therefore let us leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ and move on to maturity. There is no need to lay again the foundational truths of the necessity of repenting from dead works and putting your faith in the work of God. We need not to go over again the importance of baptism, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

You have circled this mountain long enough, let us move on!!

Paul told the church in Eph. 4:12-16

- God has appointed in the church pastor teachers for the purpose of bringing the saints into maturity so that they might become involved in the ministry.
- They are to build up the body of Christ until they all come into a unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God.
- A fully matured believer, attaining to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ!
- He declares that the purpose of this maturing and growing up is that they would no longer be as little children who are tossed about and fall for every wind of doctrine developed by cunning and crafty men who seek to prey upon the saints:

Focus & Move Forward Towards God's Purpose & Vision For You:

Paul in Philippians 3:12-14 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴ I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Consider:

- We Have Not Yet Attained To The Full Measure Of That Which God Has For Us!
1. When God apprehended you, and drew you to Himself, He had a plan and purpose for you.
 - a. Jesus to His disciples, John 15:16a "You did not choose Me, I chose you and ordained that you should be My disciples, and that you should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit might remain."
 - He chose them that they might produce lasting fruit.

Paul's Focus: "This is what I do."

1. Forgetting those things which are behind.
 - a. Not trying to live on past laurels or accomplishments.
 - b. Not trying to live on past experiences.
2. Reaching for those things which are before.
3. I press toward the mark.

Consider: The closer you get to the end of the race, the harder you should pursue the prize.

- a. You do not slacken as you approach the finish line, but you put everything into it.
- b. Paul wrote that they that run in a race, though many may be running, only one will receive the prize. So run that you might obtain.

What kind of prize will you receive?

Paul desired the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Writing to Timothy Paul said in II Tim. 4:7-8 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.