

Message #47

Exodus 24:12-18

One of the things that is very troubling today about many churches is that there is no real focus on the pulpit where the Word of God is supposed to be read and taught. A while ago, I attended a funeral and when you looked at the platform it was almost as if the pulpit were an afterthought. In fact, I was asked to officiate at a funeral for someone in another church and when I got to the church there was no pulpit on the platform. There were drums and instruments, but the pulpit was off in the corner. So I had to request that the pulpit be brought to the platform.

Now when we come to this portion of Exodus, God is just beginning to organize things so that His people may worship Him and experience His presence and blessings. In this text of Scripture, we get to see how sacred and how serious the written Word of God truly is in the mind of God. When you take a serious look at this text, it becomes obvious that the written Word of God is no light matter. It is no afterthought. The written Word of God is to be primary. That is very clear from this section.

AT GOD'S COMMAND, MOSES AND JOSHUA GO UP THE MOUNTAIN TO GET STONE TABLETS WRITTEN BY GOD FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF THE PEOPLE.

Now we have already seen a major emphasis on the written Scriptures (24:3, 4, 7). It is clear from the beginning that God placed a high priority on the written Word.

REALITY #1 – God commanded Moses to come up on the mountain and remain there.
24:12a

What this means is that God is telling Moses you are to come up on the mountain and you are going to be here for a while.

Now if we put this in the context of God giving His Word, we certainly see that getting and grasping the Word of God will not be some simple, quick, light experience. I think this is a very important point to see. Getting and grasping God's Word is not one magical moment; it is a process that takes time.

There are people who believe a quick seminar or a quick retreat can give them a deep grasp of God's Word; but the fact is a deep grasp of God's Word will take a lot of time. In fact, it will take a life time.

There are some ministers who think they can just throw together some quick study that will feed God's people. That will never happen. In order to feed God's people, there has to be careful, prayerful preparation, a lot of preparation.

We see that right here. God told Moses you come up the mountain because you are going to receive My Word and it will take time.

By the way, what Moses is going to get are the O.T. commandments. He is not getting the entire Bible. So if just getting and understanding the commandments takes time, how much longer to grasp the entire Word of God.

REALITY #2 – God commanded Moses to come up on the mountain to get the written Word of God. **24:12b-e**

Now God does not tell Moses to come up so they can sing praise choruses. He does not tell him to come up and bring instruments so they can sing songs around a campfire. He does not tell him to come up and we can share stories about what you have seen Me do. He tells him to come up to get the Word of God. God's people need God's Word and Moses was the man singled out by God to get it.

There are four facts brought out about it:

Fact #1 - The Word of God will be on stone tablets. **24:12b**

By virtue of the fact that this was to be written on stone, shows the permanence of the Word of God. When you write something on paper, there is always the possibility that the paper can get wet and the words smeared and there is the possibility that the paper can disintegrate. But not stone tablets. By the way, as we have often pointed out the preservation of manuscripts written on papyrus paper or vellum is a major proof that God did preserve His Word, even when written on paper. But initially His Word was written on stone.

Now these stone tablets would eventually be kept in the “ark of the covenant” (Ex. 25:21-22). This shows you how sacred those tablets are and how important God's Word is to worship.

Fact #2 - The Word of God will contain the law and the commandments. **24:12c**

Now there are two nouns used for the written Word: 1) Law (torah); 2) Commandments (mitzvah). Now the emphasis of the word “law” is more general in that it refers to the inspired instruction God gives that was to be followed. The emphasis of the word “commandments” is more specific in that it gives the specific precepts of God that showed what God wanted done and what God did not want done (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 501).

Now you could not pick and choose between the law and commandments, because all of it was the Word of God. Therefore every bit of it was needed.

So God wanted Moses to go up the mountain to get His Word so that he could instruct the people concerning what was right and wrong according to God. He would have it in writing, so that the people could be instructed.

Fact #3 - The Word of God will be written by God. **24:12d**

God Himself gave His Word and wrote His Word. Those university professors and high school teachers who say the Bible is just a book written by a bunch of religious men, just like any other book had better take serious notice of what this book claims. The Bible claims to be a book written by God, every word of it and we believe the claim is true. What this book says is those who deny God and His Word will one day face the God they denied.

Fact #4 - The Word of God is written to give instruction. **24:12e**

Now the word “instruct” (yarah) is a very interesting Hebrew word. It is a word that carries with it the idea of casting or shooting or communicating God’s Word little by little in sprinkling fashion as the foundation of faith (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 366).

So God’s Word is to be carefully communicated and shot forth because this is the foundation that God wants people built on.

By the way, the word was used for an archer who shot an arrow. So teaching is not to be some open forum relativity group discussion, it was to be one person shooting straight truth.

REALITY #3 – Moses and his servant Joshua went up the mountain. **24:13**

Moses knew he was going to be up on that mountain for a long time, so he took an assistant with him. He took Joshua up with him. This is important. Obviously Moses had his eye on Joshua. In fact, Joshua is identified as being Moses’ servant. The word means that Joshua became Moses’ personal attendant. He apparently wanted to serve and help Moses because he realized that Moses was a very unique man of God.

This started the process of letting him share in some very sacred things. Joshua would be the next man to take over and right at the beginning he was learning the importance of God’s Word. God was actually preparing Joshua because he will be the next leader of Israel. At this point he did not know that, but he would learn the importance of the Word of God.

Any true leader of God will recognize the importance of God’s written Word and if someone is running things who does not recognize that, they are not a true leader of God.

Probably what happened here is that Joshua only went part way up the mountain with Moses and not all the way. We may conclude this by making a couple of observations:

First of all, at the end of **verse 13** it says, “Moses went up to the mountain of God.” So the emphasis seems to be on the fact that Moses ascended higher than Joshua.

Second, in **Exodus 32:15**, Moses turns to go down the mountain and then apparently runs into Joshua, who was lower in elevation and could hear what was going on with Israel (32:17).

So even though Moses and Joshua go up the mountain, Moses is still the key man of God; but Joshua was being groomed because he also will develop into a great man of God.

REALITY #4 – Moses tells the elders to stay put and bring cases to Aaron and Hur. **24:14**

It is obvious from this text that God's people do need leaders to oversee things. In any work of God, God does not want people "doing what is right in their own eyes."

Now Aaron and Hur were recognized as being close associates of Moses (Ex. 17:12). Aaron had been with Moses from the beginning when he went to Egypt to deliver Israel. We are not sure who Hur is. It is speculated by Jewish tradition that he was the husband of Miriam, Moses' sister. These were good choices of leaders to watch over things and handle things until Moses got back.

So what Moses did before he left to go up the mountain to get the Word of God was tell the elders that if they needed specific insight into something while he was gone, that they could check with Aaron and Hur.

Now this is important to see. There is structured leadership and some leaders are in a better position to handle more difficult things than other leaders.

REALITY #5 – Moses went up the mountain and a cloud covered the mountain. **24:15**

Now this thick cloud clearly indicated the presence of God was at this place (Ex. 19:16). This was God's glory cloud that actually meant the physical presence of God was actually on this mountain.

Now the cloud had already served for protection and guidance for the Israelites so clearly when the people saw that cloud they were well aware of the fact that it represented the presence of the majestic and awesome God.

Moses was up on that mountain in the very presence of God.

REALITY #6 – God's glory cloud stayed on that mountain six days and on day seven God called out to Moses. **24:16**

Now God's presence is at the top of this mountain and it may be that it took Moses six days to get up there on top to the summit. Again we see that getting close to God and getting the Word of God is no quick process. The climb to the top of this mountain was a deliberate and careful climb. We may assume that Joshua made the climb for about six days with Moses and then Moses went on up higher.

Again we learn that getting a true, deep understanding of the Word of God will be a deliberate and careful process. It will not happen instantly. Careful thought and effort will be required. There were six days of careful preparation and on day seven Moses heard from God.

REALITY #7 – God’s glory appeared to Israel to be like a consuming fire on the mountain top.
24:17

The mountain had a fiery aspect to it and the Lord was like a “consuming fire.” As the people of Israel watched, they were looking at the top of the mountain where Moses was headed and they saw an awesome display of the sovereignty of God. His glory was there and a consuming fire was there.

The idea of a “consuming fire” means the fire was blazing and anything that would get near it would get burned.

REALITY #8 – Moses was on top of that mountain 40 days and 40 nights. **24:18**

Now **verse 18** says that Moses entered “the midst of the cloud.” So what this means is that Moses was given permission by God to enter into this cloud because if anyone tried it without invitation, they would be burned up.

Now Moses was up on top of this mountain for 40 days and 40 nights. We must assume that this is an additional 40 days and 40 nights to the six days it took to climb up there.

We would ask just exactly what is Moses doing up there? He is getting the written Word of God from God.

Do not lose sight of why Moses is on that mountain. He is up on that mountain to get the Word of God.

Do you see how important God’s Word is? It is sacred. It is holy.