TOPIC: SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR

Let us acknowledge and worship our God who is right here with us.

KEY POINTS

- Exodus 24 begins with an incredible incident: Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and 70 of Israel's elders saw God.
- The awesomeness of this event was so great that it defied description. All that was recorded was that His feet were walking on sapphire pavement that was as clear as the sky.
- God then called Moses up into the mountain to give him the tables of stone on which the Commandments were written. Moses didn't know how long he would be gone, so he didn't give the people a specific return date.
- However, it is clear that he knew he would be gone for some time because he told the people to consult Aaron and Hur if any lawsuits needing attention arose while he was away.
- While Moses was on the mountain, all the signs of God's presence and favour were prominent in the camp: the mountain was covered by a cloud that looked like a consuming fire; the miracle of manna still fed them every morning; and water flowed daily to quench their thirst.
- The elders themselves had recently seen God and lived. There could be no reason to doubt the fact that God was with them. He was very near to them…and yet so far (see Exodus 32:1-8).
- So near, and yet so far! Right in the shadow of His presence, having eaten at His table, enjoying His provision, they proceeded to engage in the most horrible act of idolatry imaginable: they assigned God the status of a calf.
- Israel was living under the 'type and shadow' of a marriage covenant with God (represented by the 10 Commandments) and living under His divine provision, divine protection and divine favour. Yet they reduced the Almighty God to an image of the docile animal most commonly used as a tool to humanity.
- We need to ask ourselves the following question: Just how close is God to us today?
- What are the things we can look at that demonstrate His nearness, His favour, and His provision? What signs do we have that God is for us? Have we seen Him lately?
- Certainly, for us, as it was with Israel, there are many indicators of God's divine presence with us.
- We see God in His holy word; it is His self-revelation to us. We are blessed beyond measure to have such quick and ready access to His word.
- We see God in Jesus Christ—God manifested in human flesh. We have read of Him as a historical figure, but, even more importantly, we know Him as the true and living God whose presence we feel today.
- We see God's divine favour demonstrated to us through Calvary's cross. This is how God has provided forgiveness of sins for all humanity and eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (John 3:16).
- When we receive salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, He fills us with His Holy Spirit. This is how near God is to us: He takes up His abode within us and we live in Him. This is far better than the access Israel experienced with the Ark of the Covenant residing in the tabernacle.

KEY SCRIPTURES:
Exodus 24:1, 9-17, 32:1-8; Malachi 3:16-17a

- We experience God's love, favour and presence through answered prayer. He forgives our sins as we pray for forgiveness. He heals our bodies of deadly diseases as we pray for healing. He delivers us from evil, diabolical, demonic attacks as we pray for deliverance. He provides jobs and sustenance as we pray for His provision. God is very near to us, and He hears and answers prayer.
- We now must ask ourselves this question: Having seen how near God is to us, how near are we to Him?
- Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And…I will come again and receive you to Myself" (John 14:2-3).
- What are we doing as we await His return: demeaning Him; worshiping idols of wood and stone; turning God into our 'tool'? God forbid!
- Instead, let us thank God for being so near—and dear—to us. Let us ensure that our worship is real and heartfelt, and that our thanksgiving is sincere and joyful. Let us fill His book with the good things we say about Him:
  - Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name. "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels…" (Malachi 3:16-17a).
- Let us make sure that no one can ever say of us, "He/she is so near to God, but yet so far." Let us get as close to Him in our mind, heart and spirit as He is to us.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1) "So near and yet so far." Answer the following questions taken from the lesson:
   - What are the things in your life that demonstrate God's nearness, His favour, and His provision?
   - What signs have there been in your life that affirm the fact that God is for you?
2) In your opinion, do you "see" God quite frequently or have there been missed connections? What can we do to decrease these missed opportunities and to draw even closer to God?
3) "Let us fill His book with the good things we say about Him." Take some time to reflect and talk to one another about the goodness of God and to thank Him for His presence in your lives.
4) Throughout the course of the week, set aside time to draw even closer to God and to yet again thank Him for the fact that He is right there with you.

Prayer Time

"Little children, little children who love their Redeemer, are the jewels, precious jewels, His loved and His own" (William Cushing). Thank You, Lord, for this reassurance and for the fact that You are right here with us. Always.

Life Group Icebreaker: What are the precious "jewels" that you have in your possession?

WEEK OF SUNDAY, MARCH 12, 2017

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

(Reminds me/Confirms) (New idea) (Think about)

(Do this) (Speaks to my heart) (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS