Exodus Chapter Thirty Three

Overview of Exodus Chapter Thirty-Three

In Exodus chapters 20-31, we have the record of the giving and ratification of the covenant between God and Israel. In Exodus chapter 32, we have the breaking of the covenant by Israel through the sin of idolatry. In Exodus chapter 32, we saw that the Israelites lost fellowship with God by committing the sin of idolatry. Those who repented were restored to fellowship with God. This was accomplished by first their confession of their sin (1 John 1:9), which restored them to fellowship and this fellowship, was maintained by obedience to the second commandment (Exodus 20:4-6). Those who refused to repent were executed by the Levites (Exodus 32:25-29) and the Lord (Exodus 32:35). Those who repented were of course God’s people and so were those who did not repent. The latter was severely disciplined by God by being killed. This discipline demonstrated that they were God’s people and was a manifestation of God’s love for them (Hebrews 12:5-11; Revelation 3:19). Now, in Exodus chapters 33-34, we have the record of the renewal of the covenant or restoration of it.

In Exodus 33:1-6, we have the Lord commanding Moses to lead Israel out of Sinai and in the direction of the land of Canaan (1-6). In this passage, the Lord also tells Moses to communicate to the Israelites that He would not go in their midst because they are obstinate people and He might destroy them on the way. The people went into mourning over this statement. Then, Exodus 33:7-11 records Moses’ privileged position in that he was on intimate terms with the Lord. Moses is said to have spoke face to face with the Lord as two friends would speak to each other. In Exodus 33:12-23, we have Moses asking for reassurance from the Lord that he was pleasing to the Lord. The Lord promises that His presence will go with Moses as he leads the Israelites and will give Moses rest. Moses requests to see the Lord’s glory and the Lord responds by doing so while proclaiming His grace and compassion towards sinners. Thus, we see the Lord reassuring Moses and the Israelites.

Exodus 33 contains another theophany, which is a theological term used to refer to either a visible or auditory manifestation of God (Gen. 32:29-30; Ex. 3:2; 19:18-20; Josh. 5:13-15; Dan. 3:26). In this chapter we see both a visible and auditory appearance of God.

Dr. Thomas Constable presents with the chart some comparisons and contrasts between the giving of the covenant and the renewal of it. (Notes on Exodus, 2003 Edition, Dr. Thomas Constable; page 155; Published by Sonic Light; www.soniclight.com/)
### The Giving of the Covenant (Exodus 20-31) | The Restoring of the Covenant (Exodus 33-34)

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<td>All the people were to be priests (19-5-6)</td>
<td>Only the Levites would be priests (32:29).</td>
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<td>Moses ascended Mt. Sinai and God spoke with him there while the people waited below (19:20).</td>
<td>Moses ascended Mt. Sinai and God spoke with him there while the people waited below (32:31).</td>
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<td>God sent His angel to destroy Israel’s enemies (23:23).</td>
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<td>The tabernacle in the center of the camp was to be the “tent of meeting” where God would meet with the people (25:8; 27:21; 28:43; 29:42-43).</td>
<td>Another “tent of meeting” outside the camp was where God met with Moses and Joshua only (33:7).</td>
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<td>God displayed His glory for all the people to see on Mt. Sinai (24:16-17).</td>
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<td>God covered Moses’ face lest he see too much of God’s glory (33:18-23).</td>
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<td>God revealed His glory to test the people and to keep them from sinning (20:20).</td>
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<tr>
<td>God wrote the Ten Commandments on stone tablets (Deuteronomy 10:1-4).</td>
<td>Moses wrote the Ten Commandments on stone tablets (34:28).</td>
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<td>God gave the Ten Commandments (20:2-17).</td>
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<tr>
<td>The structure of the narrative begins and ends with warnings against idolatry (20:22-23; 23:13) and instructions for proper worship (20:24-26; 23:14-19).</td>
<td>The structure of the narrative begins and ends with warnings against idolatry (34:11-17) and instructions for proper worship (34:27-28).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moses expressed amazement when he saw the people (32:19).</td>
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**Exodus 33:1-6: The Command to Leave Sinai and Go to Canaan**

Exodus 33:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, “Depart, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘To your descendants I will give it.’ 2 I will send an angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. 3 Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, because you are an obstinate people, and I might destroy you on the way.” 4 When the people heard this sad word, they went into mourning, and none of them put on his ornaments. 5 For the LORD had said to Moses, “Say to the sons of Israel, ‘You are an obstinate people; should I go up in your midst for one moment, I would destroy you. Now therefore, put off your ornaments...
from you, that I may know what I shall do with you.’” 6 So the sons of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward. (NASB95)

In Exodus 33:1, the Lord tells Moses to lead the Israelites from the Mount Sinai region to the land, which He promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This promise of land to the descendants of these three men is called the Palestinian covenant which is connected to the Abrahamic covenant. In other words, the “Palestinian” covenant is in fact an extension of the “Abrahamic” covenant, which is recorded in Genesis 12:1-3. This promise of land was first mentioned in the book of Exodus in 3:8 and reiterated in Exodus 3:17, 13:5, 23:23, and 34:11. The descendants of these three are of course the Israelites.

Like the “Abrahamic” covenant, the “Palestinian” covenant that the Lord established with Abraham denoted the Lord’s gracious undertaking for the benefit of Abraham and his descendants. Like the “Abrahamic” covenant, the “Palestinian” covenant was “unconditional” meaning that its fulfillment was totally and completely dependent upon the Lord’s faithfulness.

Genesis 13:14 The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward 15 for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. 16 I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.” (NASB95)

The Lord’s promise of land to Abraham and his descendants in Genesis 13:14-17 is an “extension” upon His promise to Abram in Genesis 12:1 and is thus related to the “Abrahamic” covenant. The “Palestinian” covenant was a confirmation and enlargement of the original “Abrahamic” covenant and amplified the land features of the “Abrahamic” covenant (Gen. 13:14-15; 15:18).

The “Palestinian” covenant was confirmed to Isaac (Gen. 26:3-4) and Jacob (Gen. 35:12), reiterated to Moses (Ex. 6:2-8) who described the geographical boundaries of the land in Numbers 34:1-12 and who prophesied of its ultimate during the millennium in Deuteronomy 30:1-9.

The land grant under the “Palestinian” covenant: (1) Most of the land in Turkey (2) Most of East Africa (3) Saudi Arabia (4) Yemen (5) Oman and Red Sea (6) Syria (7) Iraq (8) Jordan.

The land grant has boundaries on the Mediterranean, on Aegean Sea, on Euphrates River and the Nile River.

Deuteronomy 30:1-10 describes seven features of the “Palestinian” covenant: (1) The nation will be plucked off the land for its unfaithfulness (Deuteronomy...
28:63-68; 30:1-3). (2) There will be a future repentance of Israel (Deuteronomy 28:63-68; 30:1-3). (3) Israel’s Messiah will return (Deuteronomy 30:3-6). (4) Israel will be restored to the land (Deuteronomy 30:5). (5) Israel will be converted as a nation (Deuteronomy 30:4-8; cf. Rm. 11:26-27). (6) Israel’s enemies will be judged (Deuteronomy 30:7). (7) The nation will then receive her full blessing (Deuteronomy 30:9).

The Lord promises that this land would be given to Abram’s descendants and this promise was fulfilled to a certain extent by Israel under Joshua (Josh. 21:43-45; cf. 13:1-7) and David and Solomon (1 Kings 4:20-25; Nehemiah 9:8).

The prophets of Israel prophesied of the “Palestinian” covenant’s literal and ultimate fulfillment during the millennial reign of Christ (Isaiah 11:11-12; Jeremiah 16:14-16; 23:3-8; 31:8, 31-37; Ezekiel 11:17-21; 20:33-38; 34:11-16; 39:25-29; Hosea 1:10-11; Joel 3:17-21; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 4:6-7; Zephaniah 3:14-20; Zechariah 8:4-8).

During the millennial reign of Christ, the northern boundary of Israel will extend from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River (47:15-17), incorporating much of modern Lebanon and Syria. The eastern border will extend south from the Euphrates River, incorporating the Golan Heights and portions of Syria almost up to Damascus, and continue south to where the Jordan River leaves the Sea of Galilee. The river will be the eastern border to the Dead Sea’s southern end (47:18). From there the southern border will go westward, incorporating the Negev and parts of Sinai all the way along the Brook of Egypt (the modern Wadi-el-Arish) to the point where it reaches the Mediterranean Sea (47:19), the western border (47:20). Although the land will have twelve tribal divisions, these subdivisions will differ form those in the Book of Joshua.


Now, in Exodus 33:2, the Lord tells Moses that He will not be present in their midst when they travel to Canaan. However, He does promise that He will send His angel. He made this same promise to Moses in Exodus 23:20 and 23 as well as in Exodus 32:34. This angel is the preincarnate Christ as we pointed in previous studies in the book of Exodus.
In Exodus 23:20, we asked the question as to who the angel is? Is it Michael, the arch angel since Daniel 12:1 says that he stands watch over the nation of Israel? Or is it the preincarnate Christ?

Exodus 23:20 “Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. 21 Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in him. 22 But if you truly obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. 23 For My angel will go before you and bring you in to the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them.” (NASB95)

“Angel” is the noun mal·āḵ (מַלְאָךְ) (mal-awk), which means, “messenger” and is used in the Old Testament with reference to “elect” angels (Gen. 19:1; Ps. 91:11) and men (Deuteronomy 2:26; Josh. 6:17) and of the “preincarnate” Christ (Gen. 22:11; Zech. 3:1).

God’s statement in Exodus 23:21 makes clear that it is the preincarnate Christ and not Michael or any other elect angel. Notice God says to the Israelites that the Israelites are to obey this angel and not be rebellious towards Him since He will not pardon their transgression. This clearly implies that this angel has the ability to forgive sin, which is God’s prerogative alone. Also, God says that He will not pardon the transgression of the Israelites because His name is in this angel. Nowhere in Scripture is this said to be the case of any angel but only Jesus Christ. Exodus 23:23 also reveals that this angel will lead them in conquering the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. So it appears that this angel was manifesting God’s presence to the Israelites and doing all the things that the Lord promised Moses and the Israelites. Therefore, Exodus 23:20-23 makes clear that to have this angel present with them was equivalent to God being present. Furthermore, if you recall, the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush in Exodus 3:2. It was the angel of God who had led the Israelites by means of a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night in Exodus 14:19. Therefore, the Lord’s promise to Moses that He will send His angel before the Israelites in order to drive out the inhabitants of the land of Canaan is a reiteration of the same promise which appears in Exodus 23:20-23.

In Exodus 33:14, in response to Moses’ intercessory prayer, the Lord promises him that His presence would go with them to Canaan. “My presence” must be a reference to this angel since if the Lord was going to tell Moses that He would be personally present with them He would not have used this expression but rather simply said “I will go with you” or something similar. Instead, the Lord says “His presence” would go with the Israelites and Moses, which clearly implies that “His
presence” is representing Him and equal to Him but not Him personally. Therefore, this angel that the Lord promised Moses to go along with the Israelites to Canaan was in fact the preincarnate Christ which would also indicate that the Father was speaking to Moses here in Exodus 33 and not the Son of God.

In Exodus 33:2, the term “Canaanite” denotes those individuals descended from Canaan who lived in the land west of the Jordan River before the conquest of Joshua and whose western border was the Mediterranean Sea, especially in the lower and coastal regions (Gen. 13:12; Num. 33:51). The northern border of the land of the Canaanites went as far as Sidon, which is 120 miles north of Jerusalem and the southern border extended to Gerar, which is about 11 miles south-southeast of Gaza, which was on the coast 50 miles southeast of Jerusalem. The Canaanites who lived in the highland regions were often called “Amorite.”

At times the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, were called “Canaanites” but strictly speaking the nations who dwelt on the coasts or river lowlands were called “Canaanite” (Nm. 13:29).

The Canaanites were descendants of Noah’s son Ham. They were actually composed of seven nations (Deuteronomy 7:1) and were idolatrous (Deuteronomy 29:17), involved in the occult (Deuteronomy 18:9-10) and gross immorality (Lev. 18), which archaeology confirms. They were under a divine curse (Genesis 9:24-27).

Discoveries at the ancient Ugarit, north of Tyre and Sidon, have revealed Canaanite religion promoted child sacrifice, idolatry, prostitution in the name of religion and all kinds of occultic and immoral practices. Therefore, it was an act of justice in the Lord dispossessing the Amorites, also known as the Canaanite.

The Lord does not dispossess and judge a nation immediately until He has given it grace in the sense of giving it a sufficient amount of time to repent. Once a nation has completely rejected God’s grace and every opportunity to repent and accept Christ as Savior, it will become totally and completely saturated with evil (see Lev. 18:24-28; 20:23) and then the Lord sends judgment.

The Lord used the nation of Israel under Joshua to pour out His judgment upon the Canaanites for their immoral degeneracy (Gen. 15:16; 19:5; Lev. 18; 20; Deuteronomy 12:31). The Canaanites were defeated on the battlefield, destroyed, or integrated with other nations or enslaved to Israel (Gen. 14:1-16; 15:18-21; Ex. 3:7-10; Deuteronomy 1-3; Josh. 10-19). Therefore, Genesis 9:24-29 sets the stage or lays the foundation for Israel’s foreign policy in the land (Deuteronomy 20:16-18).

“Canaan” is the more ancient name of Palestine, apparently derived from Hurrian, meaning, “belonging to the land of red purple,” the dye the early Canaanites or Phoenician traders peddled far and wide. It was obtained from the
murex shells found on the Mediterranean (Phoenician) coast” (Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament, page 54, AMG Publishers).

The land of Canaan was west of the Jordan River before the conquest by Joshua, which had the Mediterranean Sea as its eastern border and whose position served as the route of two major highways between Egypt and the Western coast of the Arabian Peninsula to Mesopotamia and Asia Minor (with connections to India and Europe respectively).

The natural boundaries of Canaan as expressed in the Bible extend from the Negev in the South to the northern reaches of the Lebanon Range in Syria and the land west of the range and of the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea.

In Genesis 10:19, Moses defines the borders of the Canaanites because it is this land that the Lord will dispossess for Israel and fulfill the prophecy of Noah in Genesis 9:24-25 regarding Canaan. The northern border of the land of the Canaanites went as far as Sidon, which is 120 miles north of Jerusalem and the southern border extended to Gerar, which is about 11 miles south-southeast of Gaza, which was on the coast 50 miles southeast of Jerusalem.

In Exodus 33:2, the “Amorite” means literally “the Westerner,” and thus the name Amorites is generally supposed to mean “western highlanders” (cf. Numbers 13:29; Deuteronomy 1:7-20; Josh 10:6), or “tall ones” (cf. Amos 2:9; see also Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 2:10). The Amorites were so prominent that their name seems sometimes to be used for Canaanites in general (e.g., Joshua 24:8). In Abraham's day the Amorites lived west of the Dead Sea, in Hazazon-tamar (Genesis 14:7), “that is Engedi” (2 Chronicles 20:2) and about Hebron (Genesis 14:13, cf. 13:18).

The “Hittites” were present in the land of Canaan during the time of Abraham according to Genesis 15:19-21 and they reached the zenith of their power sometime later and still possessed great power at the time of Solomon a thousand years later according to 2 Chronicles 1:17.

The “Perizzites” refers to a tribe of people who inhabited the mountainous region eventually taken over by the tribes of Ephraim and Judah (cf. Joshua 11:3; 17:5; Judg. 1:4f.) and because they were related to the Canaanites, the term “Perizzites” often refers to this entire group (cf. Genesis. 13:7; 34:30).

The “Hivites” settled in the land of Canaan and was displaced by Israel under Joshua (Exodus 3:8, 17; 13:5; 23:23; 33:2; 34:11; Deuteronomy 7:1; Joshua 9:1).

Genesis 34:2 records that they were in the land of Shechem and according to Genesis 36:2, Esau took a Hivite for a wife and 1 Kings 9:20 records that Solomon used them as builders. Judges 3:3 records that they settled in the foothills of Lebanon.
The “Jebusite” settled in “Jebus,” which is the name of Jerusalem when this tribe held it (Josh. 15:63; Judg. 19:10) and it wasn’t until David’s reign that they were finally driven out (2 Sam. 5:6-7; cf. 1 Kings 9:20).

In Exodus 33:3, the phrase “a land flowing with milk and honey” has appeared several times up to this point in the book of Exodus (3:8, 17; 13:5). This phrase describes the goodness of God’s provision for His people in Canaan (cf. 3:17; 13:5). It indicates that the Israelite flocks will thrive in the land of Canaan and is a place where honey bees were abundant.

John Hannah writes, “The phrase a land flowing with milk means that Canaan was ideal for raising goats and cows. Feeding on good pastureland the goats, sheep, and cows were full of milk. Flowing with honey means that the bees were busy making honey. Milk and honey suggested agricultural prosperity. This is the first of numerous references in the Old Testament to the “land flowing with milk and honey” (cf. v. 17; 33:3; Lev. 20:24; Num. 13:27; 14:8; 16:13-14; Deuteronomy 6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20; Josh. 5:6; Jer. 11:5; 32:22; Ezek. 20:6, 15).”

So in these four passages in Exodus this phrase indicates that the Lord is promising Moses that He is going to bring the Israelites to the land of Canaan where they will have plenty of land for their flocks and will properly there. However, there are enemies they will have to overcome in order to take possession of this land. Their faith in God’s land promises will appropriate the power of God needed to take possession of the land. The same power that will deliver the Israelites from Egypt will also enable them to dispossess the great nations already in the land of Canaan.

The fact that the Lord tells Moses that He would not be in their midst as they traveled to Canaan was actually an act of mercy. The Lord also told Moses this in order to impress upon the Israelites their need to respect God’s holiness. They had failed to do so by worshipping the molten calf.

Exodus 33:4 records the Israelites mourning over the fact that the Lord would not be present with them but would instead send His angel because He might destroy them on the way to Canaan. The fact that the Israelites constructed a golden young bull to lead them to Canaan reveals their desire for God’s presence. Of course, God rejected their sinful attempt to misrepresent Him with the bull. But nonetheless, the people expressed this desire for God’s personal presence among them. The Lord’s refusal to be personally present with the Israelites caused the latter to feel rejected by the Lord. This was severe punishment.

This does not mean that the Lord would not have further contact with them or help them because He was sending His Son who is the angel. However, it does mean that because of their sinful natures, He would not directly accompany them.

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in the same degree that He did prior to the golden young bull incident. Moses’ intercessory prayer as recorded in Exodus 33:12-17 results in the Lord reversing His decision and promising Moses that His presence will go with them to Canaan.

In Exodus 33:5, the Lord told Moses to command the Israelites to take off their ornaments in order that He might know what He should do with them. This was to demonstrate overtly their mourning for their sin and the Lord telling them He would not be personally present with them but would send His angel in His stead. These ornaments were jewelry of all types and would often be of gold. By having the Israelites remove their gold jewelry the Lord was reminding the Israelites of their great sin in making the young golden bull. The removal of the gold would remind them that their mourning was the direct result of this great sin. For the rest of the Exodus the Israelites would no longer wear their gold jewelry. They would be dressed as if in mourning.

Douglas Stuart writes “In the ancient Near East, mourning tended to involve appearance, not just attitude, so that what one wore was a part of the appearance aspect of mourning. Nothing fancy could adorn a mourner because fancy dress was associated with cheerfulness and might contradict the desired pattern, which was thoroughgoing mourning behavior designed to appeal to a god (or the true God) for relief of suffering (including in this case relief from the unknown miseries that might be subsumed under “and I will decide what to do with you”). Therefore they removed all adornment and made their appearance ‘plain’ as a sign of mourning.”

Exodus 33:7-11: Moses’ Privileged Position

Exodus 33:7 Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp. 8 And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent. 9 Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the Lord would speak with Moses. 10 When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent. 11 Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent. (NASB95)

In Exodus 33:3, the Lord told Moses “I will not go up in your midst, because you are an obstinate people, and I might destroy you on the way.” Then, in Exodus 33:5, he instructed Moses to communicate this to the Israelites. Now, here in Exodus 33:7, we have the Moses moving the tent from the midst of the Israelite camp and pitching it a good distance outside their camp in order that the Lord would not destroy them on the way to Canaan. He called this tent, “the tent of meeting.”

Exodus 33:7-11 stands in stark contrast to Exodus 33:1-6. The former reveals that God was pleased with Moses whereas the latter reveals His displeasure with the Israelites. The former reveals that Moses and the Lord were on intimate terms whereas the latter reveals the strained relationship between the Israelites and the Lord. Moses was on intimate terms because of his habitual obedience and the Israelites were not because of their habitual disobedience.

Now, we must remember that at this point in the Exodus narrative, Moses had received the instructions for the construction of the tabernacle but it had yet to be built. Therefore, this tent is not the tabernacle but rather a smaller tent used as a meeting place for Moses, the Israelites and God over which the pillar of cloud stood. So this tent served some of the functions of the tabernacle that later replaced it. So the tent mentioned in Exodus 33:7-11 is a temporary makeshift tent which would be replaced by the tabernacle. This tent of meeting in Exodus 33:7 never held the Ark of the Covenant or any of the other sacred furniture. It was never used for sacrifices and it was never anointed as the tabernacle was after its completion.

The NET Bible has this comment “A widespread contemporary view is that this section represents a source that thought the tent of meeting was already erected (see S. R. Driver, Exodus, 359). But the better view is that this is a temporary tent used for meeting the LORD. U. Cassuto explains this view very well (Exodus, 429–30), namely, that because the building of the tabernacle was now in doubt if the LORD was not going to be in their midst, another plan seemed necessary. Moses took this tent, his tent, and put some distance between the camp and it. Here he would use the tent as the place to meet God, calling it by the same name since it was a surrogate tent. Thus, the entire section was a temporary means of meeting God, until the current wrath was past.”

Douglas Stuart writes “Later this tent is mentioned in Num 11:16–17, 24–26; 12:1–8; Deut 31:14–15, in contexts or with wordings that make clear it was the simple small tent rather than the tabernacle that was being referred to, whereas the term Tent of Meeting (capitalized helpfully in the NIV) is used far more frequently, i.e., scores of times to refer to the tabernacle, so ‘tent of meeting’ is mentioned rather rarely compared to Tent of Meeting (tabernacle). In seventeen places (e.g.,

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Exod 39:32, 40; 40:2, 6, 22, 24, 29, 34) the appositional construction “the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting” is employed to be sure the reader realizes that it is the tabernacle that is being talked about since the term in the Hb., which does not employ capitalization, can be ambiguous as to its referent.”

Durham writes “This Tent was deliberately located outside the normal patterns of traffic and provided a place of access to the Presence of Yahweh for those seeking to know his will, whether by oracle or in some other manner. When Moses left the camp on his way to the Tent, Israel knew that an appointed meeting with Yahweh was at least possible. Therefore they gazed after Moses, not out of any respect or deference to him (so Childs, 592–93), but because of the unique experience of communion with Yahweh about to take place. The people’s gaze was on Moses until he entered the Tent; then they had something else as the focus of the experience, for when Moses had entered the Tent, the column of cloud both symbolizing and concealing Yahweh’s Presence would descend and take up a position at the opening of the Tent. From this cloud, Yahweh would speak to Moses, and presumably (v 7) through Moses to anyone else who might come out to the Tent with a petition.”

After the construction of the tabernacle, the tent mentioned in Exodus 33:7-11 continued to exist. This stands in contrast to the tabernacle, which was also called the tent of meeting. Numbers 2 records the twelve Israelite tribes were organized around the tabernacle. However, here in Exodus 33:7-11, we have the Israelites worshipping the Lord from afar whereas later on, God in His grace, would permit them to worship Him in their midst. Numbers 2-11 teaches that after the construction of the tabernacle, Aaron and the Levitical priests would be ministering to the Lord in the tabernacle courtyard and the holy place and holy of holies but now Joshua is the only one allowed near the tent of meeting.

Stuart writes “The wording ‘Moses used to take a tent’ (past durative use of the imperfect verb form) does not mean that he used to take a certain tent prior to the timing of 33:7 but rather that starting with the timing of 33:7, Moses regularly employed a certain tent as a symbolic substitute for the actual Tent of Meeting, the tabernacle.”

By setting up the tent of meeting a good distance from the Israelite camp, Moses was teaching the Israelites the seriousness of their sin in worshipping the golden young bull. If you recall, He severely disciplined those who were unrepentant by killing the offenders. Then, the Lord’s statement in Exodus 33:3 and 5 also indicates that the Lord was greatly displeased with the Israelites. Lastly,

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101 The Hb. article preceding /uni05DC/uni05B6/uni05D4/uni05B9/uni05D0 represents an instance of the proleptic article used to introduce a topic into the narrative; cf. comments on 2:15.
we have the Israelites forced to worship the Lord from a distance as the tent of meeting was set up a good distance from their camp.

Moses was teaching the people how relatively distant God was from them. Though, God was greatly displeased with the Israelites, He did not cut off communication with them completely. The Israelites could inquire of Him through Moses at the tent of meeting with regards to His will in a particular matter.

Interestingly, by placing the tent of meeting a good distance outside the Israelite camp, it would force an individual to demonstrate his loyalty to the Lord publicly since they would have to separate themselves from the rest of the crowd and walk out to the tent with everyone seeing them go out to it.

Another benefit for placing the tent of meeting outside the Israelite camp was that it would demonstrate to the Israelites that Moses was chosen personally by God. Previously, Moses would go up to Mount Sinai to meet with the Lord and would thus be out of the Israelites’ sight. They never saw Moses in close proximity to the Lord but now with the tent of meeting outside the camp but within their sight, they could see for themselves Moses having a conversation with the Lord as the pillar of cloud descended upon the tent.

Exodus 33:8 records the Israelites rising and standing whenever Moses entered the tent and would gaze after him after he entered it. The events recorded in Exodus 32 reveal the Israelites disrespected Moses but now they show him great respect after the Israelites had been disciplined by the Lord. To rise and stand was the standard action of respect in the ancient world, which is also true today in the twenty-first century. However, the Israelites would again disrespect him and challenge his delegated authority.

In Exodus 33:9, the reader is told that whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent and the Lord would speak with him. Up to this point in the Exodus narrative we have seen this expression “pillar of cloud” appear four times (Exodus 13:21-22; 14:19, 24). The pillar of cloud during the day and the pillar of fire at night was a visible manifestation of the Lord’s presence in the camp of the Israelites. This visible manifestation was to guide and protect the Israelites and also would comfort them. When the pillar of cloud arrived, the Israelites would know the meeting between Moses and the Lord had begun and when it left the tent, they knew that their meeting was over.

The statement in Exodus 33:10 indicates that the Israelites could see the pillar of cloud and would thus demonstrate proper respect to the Lord’s presence by bowing to the ground and worshipping Him. NASB95 translation presents a picture of the Israelites standing and remaining standing as they worshipped. This is incorrect.
“Worship” is the third person plural hithpael middle perfect form of the verb ḥā·wā·ḥ(h) (ḵāw-vaḥ’), which means “to bow in worship” since it refers to prostrating oneself as a sign of honor, worship and homage to deity. The hithpael stem is a “reflexive-factitive” hithpael meaning that the subject of the verb causes itself to enter a state. Here the subject is the Israelites and thus this stem denotes that they caused themselves to enter the state of worshipping the Lord while in a prostrate position.

Exodus 33:11 tells us that the Lord would speak face to face with Moses just as a man speaks to his friend. The expression “face to face” is an idiom that expresses intimacy. It means that they spoke openly with each other and does not contradict God’s statement in Exodus 33:20 that no one could see His face and live since this idiom is a figurative expression suggesting openness and friendship. So here in Exodus 33:7-11, we have a stark contrast with Moses on intimate terms with the Israelites who were not.

Verse 11 also tells the reader that when Moses left the tent, Joshua would remain at the tent in order to guard it from any Israelite attempting to enter without authorization. That Joshua guarded the tent of meeting does not indicate that he was on a par with Moses or superior to the Israelites since the latter could inquire of God at any time. However, it does reveal that both Moses and God trusted Joshua who would eventually lead the Israelites into the Promised Land after Moses’ death. Joshua did not live in this tent but rather his tent was nearby so that he could serve as its custodian. So he lived outside the Israelite camp. He is described in this verse as a young man which does not mean he was immature but rather that he was much younger than Moses who was in his eighties at this time with Joshua about forty.

Intimacy with God

The believer has been called into fellowship with the Trinity in order that the believer might enjoy and experience intimacy with the Trinity. Just as there is intimacy in families in the natural realm, there is also intimacy in the royal family of God.

Our lives are composed of many relationships and the greatest relationships that we have in life are those where we are able to experience intimacy with the other person. Most of our relationships with the people are merely acquaintances. An acquaintance is simply a person that you are not on intimate terms with.

Intimacy is a close, familiar and usually affectionate or loving, personal relationship with another person or group. In relation to people, intimacy is a close association with or detailed knowledge or deep understanding of a person (cf. Jeremiah 9:24).
If you are smart you will only be on intimate terms with a few and in fact, if you have one person in your life that you can be on intimate terms with then you are truly blessed. David had a friend that he was on intimate terms with, namely Jonathan (see 1 Samuel 18:1). But as great as this relationship with Jonathan was, it did not last; Jonathan was killed with his father Saul in battle. The Lord will at times remove human relationships from our lives that we value and have great intimacy in because He is trying to gain our attention. The Lord is demonstrating how much He loves us by taking away these human relationships that we have great intimacy in because He wants us to recognize our most important relationship in life and that is our relationship with Him. He loves you more than anyone…He will never let you down…He is a trusted friend…when all of have forsaken you, He is there waiting for you to come to Him. He is there waiting in the darkness as you lay on your bed at night…when your tears fall like rain and you feel as if you can’t go…He is there waiting for you with open arms! (Matthew 11:28-30)

Sadly, in our day and age, believers treat God as a mere acquaintance or they simply ignore Him, abandoning Him until the next time they are in a terrible jam. We as believers must recognize the awesome privilege that we have been given; namely, we have been called into fellowship with the Triune God (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 John 1:1-3). So why do believers treat the Lord as a mere acquaintance? They do not love Him and are disobeying the first great commandment (Mark 12:28-31).

If you love the Lord you will obey His Word.

John 14:24 “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.” (NASB95)

There is a curse upon you if you don’t love Him.

1 Corinthians 16:22, “If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha.” (NASB95)

Too often, believers value their human relationships rather than their relationship with the Lord. This is reflected in our priorities in life.


The Lord is last on the list of priorities in our lives in many believers’ lives. How ungrateful can you be? The Lord Jesus Christ constantly challenged His disciples to put their relationship with Him above every relationship that they had in life.

Luke 14:26 “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. 27 Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” (NASB95)
Of all the relationships that you have in life, your relationship with God is the most important, but it must be cultivated and matured. At the moment of conversion when you expressed faith alone in Christ alone you were entered into an eternal relationship with God and at the same time given the opportunity to become intimate with God (Galatians 3:26-28). This relationship with God can never be broken (Romans 8:38-39). You and I as church age believers have been entered into a marriage relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ at the moment of salvation (Romans 7:1-6; Ephesians 5:28-32).

Many believers are committing spiritual adultery with the Lord today forsaking their relationship with the Lord and have committed spiritual adultery by putting idols in their souls such as money, houses, wives, husbands, children, jobs and self (cf. Jeremiah 3:8-10; James 4:4-10).

A great marriage relationship is one in which the woman respects her husband and responds to his initiation. In our spiritual marriage, our Lord and Savior initiated the relationship with His death on the Cross, which demonstrated not only the Father’s love for all of us but demonstrated His infinite, eternal love for all of us in that He was willing to suffer the humiliation of the Cross.

Now, why wouldn’t you want to get to know a God like that and fall in love with Him? How could any of us, not respond to so great a love as our Lord demonstrated at the Cross in that while we obnoxious sinners, He died for us as our Substitute (Romans 5:6-8).

Many believers show no appreciation for the fact that their sins have been forgiven and this is manifested after salvation when they place the Lord as last on their list of priorities. There is a woman in Scripture who appreciated the forgiveness of her sins and it caused her to love the Lord. In fact, the Lord states because she was forgiven much, she loved much. You know we have all been forgiven much by the Lord and we should all love Him much! (Luke 7:40-47)

Like all relationships such as marriage, you need to put some effort into your relationship with the Lord. Those who make a diligent effort to know their God and be obedient to His commands as found in the Word of God will be on intimate terms with God (Proverbs 8:17).

Those who don’t make the effort will not become intimate friends with God. There is no accident…we are as close to the Lord as we want to be. Those who put the most effort into their relationship with the Lord will have greater intimacy with the Lord than those who do not put as much effort into their relationship with Him. This is illustrated in the Gospels where Peter, James and John more intimate with the Lord than the other nine apostles (cf. Mark 5:35-37; 9:2-3; 14:33-34).

The Lord discriminates and the fact that he chose these three rather than the others demonstrates this principle. He chose Peter, James and John because He was most intimate with them. Now, many believers erroneously think that because they
devote 1 hour on Sunday to going to Bible class or even two or three hours a week that they have a good relationship with the Lord and that they love Him. May I say to you that you even if you come to Bible class every day of the week this still does not mean that you have an intimate relationship with the Lord.

There appears to be two types of Christians in the world today: (1) Those who love the Lord because they obey His Word. (2) Those who do not love the Lord because they do not learn His Word or they do not apply that which they have learned.

Loving the Lord is picking up your cross and experiencing the Cross of Christ in your own life on a day by day basis. Picking up your cross means you are willing to experience identification with Christ in His death meaning you are willing to exchange living for self for living for Him and by doing so, you can experience the life of Christ (Matthew 10:37-39).

The Word of the Cross is the basis of fellowship and intimacy with the Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (NASB95)

The apostle Paul made personal application of the Word of the Cross in his own life.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (NASB95)

Galatians 6:14 But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (NASB95)

Those who pick up their Cross will become intimate with the Lord because our spiritual life and fellowship with Him pivots off His Cross! Those who achieve greater intimacy with Lord are those who have experienced the Cross in their own lives meaning they are dedicated and are devoted to picking up their own Cross making personal application of the Cross in their own lives. Those who pick up their Cross daily agree with God that they were crucified with Christ and have been raised with Christ.

The Lord wants us to acquire His viewpoint of ourselves, namely that we have been crucified with Christ...buried with Christ...raised with Christ...ascended with Christ and seated with Christ. The greater the effect the Cross has in our lives, the greater our intimacy with the Lord.

Finally, those who are diligent in pursuing their relationship with the Lord will also be rewarded with even greater intimacy with the Lord during His Millennial reign and eternal state. Those who are willing to pick up their Cross in time will reign with Christ in the future and those who reign with Christ will have greater access and intimacy with the Lord (cf. Revelation 2:17, 26; 3:21).
The “hidden manna” in Revelation 2:17 refers to the special intimate access to the Person of Christ during His millennial reign and throughout all of eternity and will be given only to the overcomer or winner believer.

Manna is called food from heaven (Ps. 78:24). In John 6:48-51 the Lord spoke of Himself as the true bread from heaven that gives eternal life in contrast with the manna of the OT.

The new title on the white stone in Revelation 2:17 refers to the privilege of having intimate access to the Person of Christ during His millennial reign and throughout all of eternity which will be exclusively to the overcomer.

**Revelation 22:12** “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. (NASB95)

I will say to each one of you that the greatest reward that can be bestowed upon us as believers by the Lord is greater intimacy with Him, greater access to His Person, greater access to His presence for the Lord is our inheritance, our reward.

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**Exodus 33:12-17: Moses Requests the Lord’s Continued Presence**

Exodus 33:12 Then Moses said to the Lord, “See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this people!’ But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, ‘I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.’ 13 Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people.” 14 And He said, “My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.” 15 Then he said to Him, “If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. 16 For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?” 17 The Lord said to Moses, “I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name.” (NASB95)

At this point in the narrative of Exodus, Moses is looking for reassurance that the Lord would continue to provide His presence as they continue the journey to Canaan. The golden calf episode had recently taken place and many of the Israelites experienced the most severe form of divine discipline, namely, the sin unto the death. By the Lord’s own admission, the Israelites were an obstinate people who constantly rebelled against the Lord’s authority. The Lord delegated authority to Moses to lead the Israelites. In verses 12-17, Moses wants reassurance that the Lord would continue to go with him and the Israelites on the way to Canaan because the Israelites were such a difficult group of people to lead. In
Exodus 33:3, the Lord told Moses He would not go up in their midst for one moment, or He would destroy them. The prospect of not having the Lord’s presence not only upset the Israelites but also Moses since this would mean that Moses would be leading the people on his own. The job of leading the Israelites had already proven to be extremely difficult with the Lord’s presence and would be unbearable for Moses if he had to go the rest of the way alone. Thus, we have him requesting that the Lord would continue to be present with him as he led the people.

In Exodus 33:12, we have Moses making an unusual statement that the Lord had not let him know whom He will send with him when in Exodus 33:2, the Lord promised him that He would send His angel to lead Israel. This angel was the Lord’s presence and was the preincarnate Christ and not an elect angel like Michael. Notice that in Exodus 33:12, Moses complains that the Lord had not let him know whom He will send “with” him whereas in Exodus 33:2, the Lord promises to send His angel “before” him in order to drive out the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. Going “before” Moses and the Israelites is a promise to lead Israel militarily whereas going “with” Moses and the Israelites contains the idea that the Lord would guide, protect and take care of the Israelites. The Lord told Moses in Exodus 33:5 that He would not personally be in the presence of the Israelite camp as He had been prior to the golden calf episode since He might destroy the Israelites.

So we have the Lord promising to go ahead of the Israelites in order to lead them to military victory over the inhabitants of Canaan but is refusing to be dwelling in their midst as He had before the golden calf episode. Thus in Exodus 33:12-17, we have Moses pleading with the Lord to be in their presence, i.e. in their midst as He had before the golden calf episode. Thus, logically, we could expect the statements in Exodus 33:12-17 to have been placed immediately after 33:1-6 but such is not the case since Moses is employing a stylistic feature that he used throughout the Genesis and Exodus narratives, namely delayed response. This means that the historical timing of the events recorded in Exodus 33:12-17 took place after the events recorded in Exodus 33:1-6. Therefore, Moses’ intercession in Exodus 33:12-17 is in direct response to the Lord saying He would no longer be present in the midst of the Israelite camp but would only go in front of their camp to lead them militarily to victory over the inhabitants of Canaan.

Now, notice in Exodus 33:12-17, four times Moses talks to the Lord about having favor in His sight (verses 12, 13 twice; 16). The Lord mentions that Moses found favor in His sight in verse 17. Moses does this since he had two requests to make of the Lord that are based upon the Lord’s declaration that Moses had found favor in His sight. These requests were not selfish or self-centered. The first request was to know God more intimately by being taught His ways with the result
of pleasing God. The second was for the Lord to continue to be present with Moses and the Israelites as they moved toward Canaan.

Moses’ first request appears in verses 12-13 and was to know God more intimately, which the Lord responds favorably to according to verse 14. Notice to know the Lord more intimately required that Moses be shown or taught the Lord’s ways! This reveals the spiritual principle that those who are on intimate terms with the Lord are knowledgeable of His ways as a result of being taught His ways. The second request appears in verses 15-16 and was to have the Lord be present in the midst of the Israelite camp as they made their way to Canaan. The Lord responds favorably to this request as well as recorded in verse 17. These two prayer requests are instructive and exemplary for pastors today in the church age.

In Exodus 33:14, the Lord responds favorably to Moses’ first request by telling Moses that His presence would go with them and give him rest. Thus, through Moses’ intercession, we have the restoration of the Lord’s promise He originally made in Exodus 3:8, 12 and 17 to personally bring the Israelites out of Egypt and into the land promised to the patriarchs.

The Lord agreed to Moses’ requests not only because He is compassionate and gracious and forgives sin but also because Moses was in fellowship with the Lord because he was obedient. Thus, the Lord also granted Moses’ request because Moses was obedient. This principle of God granting prayer requests to those who are obedient to Him and as a result experiencing fellowship with Him is found in the New Testament as well. The Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples in John 15:7 in the Vine and the Branches Metaphor that “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

In Exodus 33:14, the Lord promises Moses that “I will give you rest.” In this promise, “you” is in the singular. However, throughout the Bible, God often addresses the nation of Israel as a corporate unit with the singular pronoun. It appears that the Lord is addressing Israel as a corporate unit rather than Moses personally. It therefore, does not mean that the Lord would make Moses’ job easier since he had numerous problems later on with the Israelites as recorded in Numbers 11, 12, and 25. Thus, when the Lord promises to give Israel rest He is reiterating the promise of giving them the rest in the land of Canaan (compare Deuteronomy 12:10; 25:19; Joshua 1:13–15; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1; See also Hebrews 3–4; Numbers 13-14; Numbers 14:20-23).

In Exodus 33:15-16, Moses pleads with the Lord that He would personally go with him and the Israelites to the land of Canaan. He bases his appeal on God’s concern for His own glory and reputation. Moses uses this approach again in Numbers 14:13-16. God’s desire to maintain His reputation and manifest His glory is for evangelistic purposes meaning He wants to use the nation of Israel to lead the heathen nations of the earth to forsake their gods and worship Him. Therefore,
Moses is requesting the Lord’s presence in the midst of the Israelite camp as they head to Canaan in order that these heathen nations might exercise faith in the Lord. Moses is saying that this cannot take place if the Lord is not present. Moses is saying that success depends on the Lord being present with Israel. Moses is also saying in verses 15-16 that God’s presence and all which this implied, is what made Israel special and distinguished her from the rest of the nations.

In Exodus 33:17, the Lord grants Moses’ two requests on the basis that Moses found favor in His sight. This again reiterates the principle the Lord Jesus taught in John 15:7, that God grants prayer requests on the basis of obedience to Him.

In Exodus 33:17, the Lord says He knows Moses by name, which Moses mentions in Exodus 33:12. This expression means that Moses was on intimate terms with the Lord as a result of his obedience. This is manifested in Exodus 33:7-11.

**Exodus 33:18-23: Moses Requests the Lord Show Him His Glory**

Exodus 33:18 Then Moses said, “I pray You, show me Your glory!” 19 And He said, “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.” 20 But He said, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!” 21 Then the Lord said, “Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; 22 and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.” (NASB95)

Exodus 33:18-23 is the record of another theophany. In particular it was both an auditory and visible one. In Exodus 33:18, Moses made a request of the Lord that He would give to Moses a full self-disclosure of His glorious person. In other words, Moses wanted a revelation of God which would sustain and encourage him and inspire him to carry on as rebellious Israel’s leader. However, Moses asked for more than God was willing to grant. The Lord responded to Moses’ request by telling him that mortal man cannot see God in the fullness of His divine glory and still survive the experience (v. 20; see also John 1:18; Col. 1:15). But God graciously accommodated Himself to Moses by announcing that He would make His “goodness” pass before Moses and would “proclaim” His name in Moses’ presence (Exod. 33:19). God did not give Moses a vision of how He appears but a description of what He is and how He operates towards His moral rational creatures. The Lord’s promise to proclaim His name is another way of saying the same thing.
“Show” is the second person masculine singular hiphil active imperative form of the verb _FEUV (raw-eh’), which means “to cause to see” indicating that Moses requested that the Lord would “cause” him “to see” His glory. The imperative is not an imperative of command but request since Moses is speaking to God who is his Creator and Redeemer.

“Glory” is the masculine singular noun _KW_ (kaw-bode’), which originally meant, “that which makes something heavy, heaviness, weight, dignity” and it rapidly acquired the meaning of “honor, splendor, and power.” This has become the principle definition in the Old Testament (Gen. 45:13; Ex. 16:10; Lev. 9:6, 23). Here in Exodus 33:18, it refers to the manifestation of God’s character and nature referring to who and what He is and His modus operandi. This glory was perfectly manifested in the Person and Finished Work of Jesus Christ during the First Advent (Matt. 17:2-5; John 1:14; 1 Cor. 11:7; 2 Cor. 4:4, 6; Heb. 2:9; Rev. 19:1, 7).

“Proclaim” is the first singular qal active perfect form of the verb _FW (kaw-raw’), which means “to publicly announce,” i.e. make a public calling out of information regarding something. Here it is used of the Lord “publicly announcing” to Moses His name. In other words, it refers to the Lord providing Moses information about Himself.

“The name” is the noun _HY (shame), which has a four-fold sense: (1) It signifies the “personality” of God distinguishing Him from the heathen gods. (2) It signifies the “character” of God representing who He is. (3) It signifies God’s “work” in creation and for the salvation of men. (4) It signifies the “reputation” of God before men. Here in Exodus 33:19, it signifies the character of God representing who He is as well as His reputation.

So the Lord is telling Moses that He won’t fully manifest His glory since this would kill him since Moses was a sinner by nature. However, the Lord promises to make all His goodness pass before Moses by proclaiming His goodness, which is the function of His attribute of love which is compassionate and merciful towards sinners.

The Lord’s statement that Moses could not see His face and live indicates that Moses’ request to see the Lord’s glory was a request for the Lord to fully manifest His presence and character and nature to him since the Lord tells Moses that he could not see Him and live. The full manifestation of His character would take place if the Lord manifests fully His presence to Moses.

Instead of fully manifesting His presence to Moses, the Lord promises something to Moses, which is essential for him to know as a sinner. Namely, the Lord would proclaim before Moses His name that He is gracious to whom He chooses to be gracious and shows compassion to whom He chooses.
Moses never saw anything of God except His back since the Lord covered him with His hand as He passed by. Since God is spirit and invisible it is clear that God chose to manifest Himself in some type of human form to appeal to Moses’ human frame of reference. This teaches us that it was not seeing God which was important for Moses but rather learning about God. God’s goodness was not something to be seen but experienced. In fact, with regards to sinners, it would be an ongoing experience.

The Lord’s graciousness and compassion towards sinners constitutes His goodness. This is indicated by the Lord’s response to Moses’ request to see His glory. The Lord told Moses that He would make all His goodness pass by Him in the sense that He would proclaim His name, namely that He is gracious and compassionate towards sinners. When God says to Moses that He will make “all” His goodness pass by, He means that His goodness as revealed to Moses would be total in the sense of nothing but goodness.

Moses had seen God’s glory in the past in the cloud during the day and the pillar of fire at night over the tabernacle and at the burning bush. It appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai. However, this time Moses’ request was for a more fuller and personal experience of God’s glory. The basis of Moses’ request is assurance that God was in fact present with him as he led the Israelites toward Canaan.

Sarna (Exodus, 214) notes that the previous experiences of God’s glory were characterized by three components: (1) the glory was seen corporately, (2) it was seen at a distance, and (3) it took place at God’s initiation ([God] “freely chooses the time and place,” in Sarna’s words). By contrast, this time Moses, as Sarna says, “pleads for an exclusively individual experience, one that is close at hand and that occurs in response to his personal request there and then.”

Moses wanted incontrovertible evidence that the Lord had again accepted his people and would go with them into the Promised Land and would continue to guide and lead them. He wanted a sign that would convince him that God was with him and the Israelites. The Lord’s proclamation of His goodness which said that He was compassionate and merciful was important for Moses and the Israelites since as sinners, it was essential that God was compassionate and merciful to them in order for the Lord to continue to be in their midst because His holiness does not tolerate sin and sinners. Thus, the Lord’s proclamation of His goodness which speaks of the manifestation of His attribute of love would encourage Moses that He, the Lord would continue to be in their presence. In other words, the Lord says I will be compassionate and merciful to you sinners so I can continue to be in your midst.

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Stuart writes “Why did Moses ask God to show him his glory?” Had he not seen God’s glory already in the cloud that protected the Israelites as they escaped from the Egyptians? Had the glory of Yahweh not appeared on Sinai for all to see, and had not Moses entered inside that glory cloud repeatedly? The answer is that Moses had indeed seen God’s glory in the past and therefore wanted to see it again, in as full a way as God might choose to show it, in order to know that just as God’s glory had reassuringly accompanied him and the Israelites on such occasions in the past, Moses could count on it to be with them again once they finally set forth from Sinai. That would convince him that God was indeed still close, still protective, and still interested in him and the Israelites as his people. In other words, the glory of God was something Moses directly associated with the approbation of God on his leadership of the Israelites; and if he could again see it, he could again be certain that his leadership would once again be blessed by the great King of heaven. Previously, the glory of God had always been provided at God’s initiation and witnessed corporately (e.g., 16:7–10; 24:16–17), but this time Moses took the initiative to ask for a personal audience with God. That God responded favorably indicates Moses’ acceptance with God based on his faithfulness at all prior points of testing. In v. 13 he had asked to know God’s ‘ways’—an important request and one that would gain him much benefit. Then he went further: he wanted an experiential sensory perception of God. Such things were rarely granted to humans, as Moses would have been well aware, but Moses understood that if God were willing to grant his request for this kind of personal familiarity, he would be all the more strongly reassured of God’s favor on the forthcoming expedition away from Sinai and on to the promised land of Canaan.”

Exodus 33:19 is quoted by the apostle Paul in Romans 9:15. “I will be gracious” is the verb ḫānān (khaw-nan’), which means “to be gracious towards someone.” It depicts a heartfelt response by someone who has something to give one who has a need. It describes an action from a superior to an inferior who has no real claim for gracious treatment. Here in Exodus 33:13, it is used by the Lord to describe His modus operandi towards sinners. It refers to His grace policy, which is an expression of His attribute of love.

Grace is all that God is free to do in imparting unmerited blessings to those who trust in Jesus Christ as Savior based upon the merits of Christ and His death on the
Cross. It is God treating us in a manner that we don’t deserve and excludes any human works in order to acquire eternal salvation or blessing from God.

Grace means that God saved us and blessed us despite ourselves and not according to anything that we do but rather saved us and blessed us because of the merits of Christ and His work on the Cross. It excludes any human merit in salvation and blessing (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5) and gives the Creator all the credit and the creature none.

By means of faith, we accept the grace of God, which is a non-meritorious system of perception, which is in total accord with the grace of God. Grace and faith are totally compatible with each other and inseparable (1 Tim. 1:14) and complement one another (Rom. 4:16; Eph. 2:8). Grace, faith and salvation are all the gift of God and totally exclude all human works and ability (Eph. 2:8-9).

**Titus 3:5** He saved us, not on the basis of deeds, which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. (NASB95)

The unique Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on the Cross is the source of grace (2 Cor. 8:9) and He is a gift from the Father (2 Cor. 9:15).

**2 Corinthians 8:9** For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. (NASB95)

**2 Corinthians 9:15** Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! (NASB95)

Jesus Christ was full of “grace and truth” (John 1:17) and the believer receives the grace of God through Him (John 1:16).

**John 1:16-17** For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. (NASB95)

It is by the grace of God that Jesus Christ died a substitutionary spiritual death for all mankind (Heb. 2:9). Therefore, the throne in which Christ sits is a “throne of grace” (Heb. 4:16).

The grace of God has been extended to every member of the human race because of the act of love and justice on the Cross. At the Cross, the Father imputed the sins of every person in history-past, present and future to the impeccable humanity of Christ in hypostatic union on the Cross and judged Him as a substitute for the entire human race (Titus 2:11).

**Titus 2:11** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men. (NASB95)

The message of God’s saving act in Christ is described as the “gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24), and the “word of His grace” (Acts 20:32; cf. 14:3). By His grace, God justifies the undeserving and unworthy through faith in His Son.
Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24). Grace is an absolute and is no longer grace if we are saved on the basis of human works (Rom. 11:6).

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are the recipients of three categories of grace: (1) “Antecedent” grace: The Father’s work in eternity past. (2) “Living” grace: Our spiritual life and its accompanying invisible assets. (3) “Eschatological” grace: Resurrection bodies and our eternal inheritance. Therefore, since God has dealt graciously with the believer, the believer is in turn commanded to be gracious with all members of the human race, both believers and unbelievers (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13; 4:6; 1 Thess. 3:12).

A Christian is someone who is a “partaker” of the grace of God (Phil. 1:7) and he is to live by the same principle of grace after salvation (Col. 2:6; Rom. 6:4). Grace is the Christian’s sphere of existence (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; Col. 1:2). The believer who rejects this principle is said to have “fallen from grace,” (Gal. 5:1-5).

God in His grace and love disciplines the believer in order to get the believer back in fellowship with Himself (Heb. 12:5-12). He also trains the believer through undeserved suffering in order to achieve spiritual growth (2 Cor. 12:7-11).

The believer is commanded to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18). The believer experiences the grace of God while in fellowship with God, which is accomplished by obedience to the Word of God. God in His grace has given the believer the ability to learn and apply bible doctrine through the ministry of God the Holy Spirit in order to achieve spiritual maturity (Jn. 16:13-15; 1 Cor. 2:9-16).

God in His grace has provided the church with the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher to communicate the mystery doctrine for the church age, which produces spiritual growth (Eph. 3:1-5; 4:8-12, 16). The Christian life from beginning to end is built upon God's policy of grace (2 Cor. 6:1-9; Rom. 5:2; John 1:16).

The grace of God has been manifested and revealed to the entire human race in time through the following: (1) Unique Theanthropic Person of Jesus Christ (2) Salvation work of Christ on the Cross (3) Word of God (4) Holy Spirit’s various salvation and post-salvation ministries.

God the Father according to His grace policy has provided the unbeliever the spiritual gift of evangelism and the royal ambassadorship of believers as the vehicles that God the Holy Spirit employs to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ for their salvation (Jn. 16:7-11; Eph. 4:11; 2 Cor. 5:17-21).

God the Father according to His grace policy has provided the believer with the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher as the vehicle, which the Holy Spirit employs to communicate the Word of God, which produces spiritual growth (Eph. 3:1-5; 4:8-12, 16).
God the Father according to His grace policy has provided the human race the Word of God and the Spirit of God, which reveal His plan from eternity past (Word: 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:15-16; Spirit: Jn. 16:13-15; 1 Cor. 2:9-16).

In relation to the unbeliever, God the Father’s gracious provision of salvation based upon faith in the merits of the Person and Work of Christ on the Cross-is revealed by the Holy Spirit through the communication of the Gospel. In relation to the believer, the Holy Spirit through the communication of the Word of God reveals all the benefits of God the Father’s gracious provision for their salvation.

The Spirit of God through the communication of the Word of God reveals all that the Father has graciously done and provided for the believer to do His will. Therefore, we learn about the grace of God by listening to the Spirit’s voice, which is heard through the communication of the Word of God (Colossians 1:3-6).

The Word of God informs the believer of all that God the Father has provided for the believer through Person, Work and Life of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit reveals the will of the Father through the communication of the Word of God (Acts 21:11; 28:25; 1 Cor. 12:3; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:7; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17; 3:6, 13, 22).

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is not only His impeccable unique Person and Work on the Cross but also it is the gift of His Words, His thoughts as communicated to the believer by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:16 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we possess the mind of Christ. (NASB95)

The Spirit does not operate independently from the Word of God when He is actively working on behalf of the believer (John 16:13-15). God the Holy Spirit in common grace makes the Gospel message understandable to the unbeliever (John 16:7-11; 1 Cor. 2:10-15). God in His grace has to seek after spiritually dead human beings who have no ability to seek Him (Rom. 3:11; 5:6-11; Eph. 2:1-5).

In the Greek New Testament, the term charis, "grace" refers to the revelation of the blessings and benefits given to the believer at the moment of salvation, and...
which blessings and benefits are imparted by the Holy Spirit through the communication of the Word of God, which is the mind of Christ.

These blessings and benefits would include the revelation of the following: (1) character of God and the Lord Jesus Christ; (2) blessings effected by the work of the Trinity; (3) will of the Father; (4) provisions to perform the Father’s will, (5) rewards for executing the Father’s will.

The impartation of these blessings to the believer pivots off his obedience to the will of the Father. Both the believer and the unbeliever “learn” of the grace of God (i.e. His unmerited favor) by “listening” to the voice of the Spirit, which is heard through the communication of the Word of God.

The unbeliever receives the grace of God at the moment of salvation by obeying the voice of the Spirit, which is heard by the unbeliever through the communication of the Gospel for salvation by an evangelist or a believer operating under his royal ambassadorship.

The believer receives the grace of God by obeying the voice of the Spirit who speaks to the believer regarding the will of the Father through the communication of the Word of God by the believer’s divinely ordained pastor-teacher, or fellow-believer. The Holy Spirit reveals the Word of God to the believer making it understandable to the believer since the Word of God is spiritual phenomena (Jn. 16:13-15; 1 Cor. 2:10-16).

The human race would have no knowledge of who and what God is, what He has graciously done for the human race through the death, resurrection, ascension and session of Jesus Christ if it were not for the Spirit of God. He inspired the Scriptures, which reveals these things and who speaks to humanity through the communication of the Word of God. Nor would the human race know the extent to which and manner in which God has loved the entire human race if it were not for the Spirit of God inspiring the Scripture which reveals these things and who speaks to humanity through the communication of the Word of God.

Believers would not know the deliverance that they can experience in time from Satan, his cosmic system and the old sin nature if it were not for the Spirit revealing through the communication of the Word of God the will of the Father and what the Father did on their behalf through Christ’s death and resurrection, ascension and session. They would know nothing of the fantastic future that the believer has if it were not for the Spirit revealing it to the believer through the communication of the Word of God (1 Cor. 2). The believer could not experience fellowship with God if it were not for the Spirit and the Word.

The believer is able to experience a relationship with His Master, the Lord Jesus Christ by obeying the Spirit’s voice, which is heard through the communication of the Word of God. The believer experiences the blessings of having the character of
Christ reproduced in their lives by obeying the Spirit’s revelation of the Father’s will, which is accomplished through the communication of the Word of God.

Obedience to the Father’s will as it is revealed by the Holy Spirit through the communication of the Word of God in turn enables the Holy Spirit to reproduce the life and character of Christ in the believer, which is the Father’s will for the believer from eternity past.

God the Father is the author of the salvation plan of God for sinful mankind that is based upon His grace policy and is executed by God the Son and revealed by the Holy Spirit.

The attributes of each member of the Trinity are involved in grace in that the grace of God is expressed through the harmonious function of all God’s divine attributes in relation to both men and angels.

God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are co-equal, co-infinite and co-eternal and all with the same divine essence. God is not only a unity of three Persons, all with same divine essence but also the essence of God is a unity of invisible attributes, never working independently of each other. If they did work independently of each other, this would corrupt the integrity of the divine essence.

Each of the divine attributes has a role to play in man’s salvation. Grace involves the attributes of each member of the Trinity providing in imparting unmerited blessings to the believer at the moment of salvation without compromising the divine integrity. They are also involved in providing the unbeliever the opportunity to receive these unmerited blessings by exposing them to the Gospel of grace.

Grace is God giving of Himself (His holiness) in order to benefit all mankind. Grace is the sum total of unmerited benefits, both temporal and spiritual, imparted to the sinner through the harmonious function of the sum total of divine attributes of each member of the Trinity as a result of the sinner making the non-meritorious decision to trust in the Person and Work of Christ on the Cross. This is why John writes the following: John 1:16, For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. (NASB95)

In Exodus 33:19, “I will show compassion” is the verb rā·ḥām (רָחָם) (raw-kham’), which means “to be merciful or compassionate.” Here in Exodus 33:19, the Lord is using this word to describe His modus operandi towards sinners. Like grace, it too is a manifestation of God’s attribute of love.

God’s love is “merciful” meaning that God is compassionate towards His enemies and pardons them (Eph. 2:1-7). Ephesians 2:1-7 teaches us that God’s attribute of love causes Him to be “merciful” meaning that God is compassionate towards His enemies and pardons them when they believe in Jesus Christ.
Mercy is God acting upon His policy of grace and withholding judgment. The mercy of God is a manifestation of Who God is and is thus helps to compose His glory (Ex. 34:7).

Psalm 86:15 But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth. (NASB95)

Psalm 119:156 Great are Your mercies, O LORD; Revive me according to Your ordinances. (NASB95)

Psalm 145:8 The LORD is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness. 9 The LORD is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works. (NASB95)

James 5:11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. (NASB95)

David acknowledged and expressed in his song that God had been merciful to him (Ps. 30:1-3; Ps. 86:15; 103:1-14).

The Lord Jesus Christ perfectly manifested the mercy and compassion of God since He is the love of God incarnate who manifested perfectly the character and nature of God, and thus has explained the love of God (cf. Jn. 1:18).

The mercy of God as an expression of the love of God was manifested perfectly to the entire human race through the Father’s sacrifice of His Son at the cross of Calvary and the Son’s willingness to be that sacrifice.

The Lord Jesus Christ revealed the love of God through His mercy and compassion towards members of the human race during His First Advent (Mt. 9:27, 36; 14:14; 15:22, 32; 17:15; 20:30-31, 34; 23:37; Mk. 1:41; 5:19; 6:34; 8:2; 10:47-48; Lk. 7:13; 10:33; 15:20; 17:13; 18:38-39; Lk. 7:13; Jn. 11:35).

The mercy of God is related to the believer’s salvation since God saved us on the basis of His mercy and not on the basis of human merit or actions (Tit. 3:5). God has been merciful to all believers in that He sent His Son to the cross while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:6-8).

In Luke 6:35-36, the Lord taught His disciples to imitate the Father in being compassionate towards their enemies.

Mercy and compassion are chief tenants of the royal family honor code (Matthew 5:7; Jn. 15:9-13; Rm. 12:8; 12:1; 12:9-16; 15:1-2; Ga. 6:2; Eph. 4:30-32; Col. 3:12-14; Jam. 2:8; 1 Jn. 4:16-18; Jude 22).

Therefore, in Exodus 33:19, the verb rā·ḥām means “to be merciful” in the sense that God is compassionate towards sinners and pardons them by withholding judgment when they believe in His Son Jesus Christ. So when the Lord said to Moses in Exodus 33:19 that He would have mercy upon whomever He chooses it means that He would be compassionate towards sinners and pardon them by withholding judgment when they believe in Him.
In Exodus 33:23, the Lord tells Moses that He would cover him with His hand and remove His hand. This does not mean that God is a very large human-shaped being with a giant but human sort of hand since God as to His nature is spirit and invisible. Rather, these are types of anthropomorphisms meaning that God is ascribing a human body part which He does not have in order to appeal to the human frame of reference of Moses. This hand of God spoke of God’s gentleness in that He would personally protect Moses from the full manifestation of His presence and character and nature so as to spare Moses’ life. He would protect Moses from what would otherwise kill him.

In Exodus 33:23, the word “back” carries the idea of “what remains,” that is, the afterglow of the glory of God—what was “left over” after God passed by. Since God is spirit, He does not have a body as humans do. These are only human representations of divine truths about God.9

The plural “my backs” is according to Gesenius an extension plural (compare “face,” a dual in Hebrew). The word denotes a locality in general, but that is composed of numerous parts (see GKC 397 §124.b). W. C. Kaiser says that since God is a spirit, the meaning of this word could just as easily be rendered “after effects” of his presence (“Exodus,” EBC 2:484). As S. R. Driver says, though, while this may indicate just the “afterglow” that he leaves behind him, it was enough to suggest what the full brilliancy of his presence must be (Exodus, 363; see also Job 26:14).10

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