

Understanding God in the Old Testament

A God of Worship

Exodus 35-40

This morning I want to finish looking at the book of Exodus. We find ourselves in the middle of our series on understanding God in the Old Testament – a lesson that God reveals himself throughout Scripture, and contrary to popular belief he is quite patient, he is quite loving, forgiving, willing to come alongside, even to come close to us despite how much we have fallen, how much we know we don't measure up. The God of the Old Testament is no different than his physical manifestation in the life of Jesus Christ, who modeled the same characteristics.

It really does enforce our theme verse of Hebrews 13:8 that states that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. God doesn't change, he hasn't changed and he never will. This truth in itself gives us confidence and stability doesn't it? We don't have to fear God changing the rules dependent upon how he feels. He is always the same.

When we left off last week, we looked at God as one who is full of forgiveness. We saw that one cannot fully appreciate forgiveness unless they understand who they are without the covenant of Jesus Christ: we would be people with God's anger blazing against them, people who have been disowned, people with whom God couldn't stand spending time with, people who's arrogance would mean our destruction.

All too often we talk about the forgiveness of Jesus yet never talk about who we are without it. When we realize what we truly deserve and how God would respond to us if it weren't for his Son, that makes us truly respect and honor the work of Jesus and the love of God that sent his Son into the world to help us in our time of need. This draws us into relationship with God because we have experienced Jesus in our lives. We are drawn by God's kindness and not his regulations. God doesn't want to force us to love him, but simply respond to what he has already done for us. God wants to be close in relationship

This morning we come to the last few chapters of the book of Exodus. After the whole golden calf fiasco, we find that Israelites regroup and begin to make things right. Many of them probably thought that God had given up on them, that he was too disgusted to deal with them, but Moses hears from God and begins to move forward in collecting supplies for the Tabernacle – God's dwelling place with the Israelites.

There even may be some of us here who think the same way – I have a lot of stuff in my life that would offend God and there is no way he would want anything to do with me. Listen, if God has shown patience and love and forgiveness to many of the people in scripture who were messed up like us, he has enough for you as well and will draw close to you too.

God still wanted to be close to his people. Today, I want to talk about:

Three ways to worship God.

1. The first way to worship God is to give.

First, Moses calls for two offerings, two forms of giving, to be taken in order that the Tabernacle could be constructed. Look at Moses words in **Exodus 35:5**:

5 Take a sacred offering for the Lord. Let those with generous hearts present the following gifts to the Lord...

This was the worship expressed through material giving. **God calls us to worship him with our material resources.** The scriptures list all kinds of things to be given. But look at the second gift of worship taken in **Exodus 35:10**:

10 “Come, all of you who are gifted craftsmen. Construct everything that the Lord has commanded.”

The second offering was the talents of the people. **God calls us to worship him with our skills and talents.** Now, I could go on a whole teaching on tithing or giving, or even how everything we own belongs to God, but the whole point of my message this morning is that we all have something to give to God in the form of worship but it isn't worship unless God has your heart.

If your motivation is just to appease some angry God then you have missed it. If your motivation is to earn some type of brownie points with God then you have missed it. **If your motivation is anything other than showing your appreciation to God, showing your gratefulness to God, showing your heart of surrender and love, then it doesn't matter what you bring to God, it still isn't worship.** Look at what it says about the Israelites response to this call in **Exodus 35:20-22**:

20 So the whole community of Israel left Moses and returned to their tents. 21 All whose hearts were stirred and whose spirits were moved came and brought their sacred offerings to the Lord. They brought all the materials needed for the Tabernacle, for the performance of its rituals, and for the sacred garments. 22 Both men and women came, all whose hearts were willing.*

Worship is not imposed regulations, it is a willful response to kindness of God. Look at what the Apostle Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 9:7**:

7 You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.”

Worship is a heart response to your understanding of God. What we give our materials resources and our skills to shows us something about ourselves. I dare you to take a look at two things in your life: what you give most of your materials resources to,

and what you give your skills to. If it isn't in the name of Jesus Christ, then your worship life is somewhere else and God's doesn't have your heart. It is a sign of the times, that many worship a lot of things and what they label their religion isn't one of them.

Following Jesus isn't about a religion, it is about a relationship. Living a life of worship is in response to his kindness, and if you aren't worshipping him, then you don't understand his kindness, you don't understand what he has done for you, and my challenge to you to find out for yourself. It is hard for someone to be passionate about someone they don't know or someone they don't understand. Dive into God's Word because it reveals the kindness of God and shows you what God is like. In fact, pray and ask God to give you a heart of worship for him, and see what happens.

The Israelites were given the choice to respond to God's call of worship, and we read that they responded with everything that was needed to build the Tabernacle, furnish it, and dress the Priests. Look at what the craftsmen told Moses in **Exodus 36:5**:

5 They went to Moses and reported, "The people have given more than enough materials to complete the job the Lord has commanded us to do!"

When people worship God, there will always be enough to get the job done. Our goal is to make churches across this nation, and in other countries expressions of worship to God, full of resources and giftings to get the job done – not because we have guilted everyone to give, but because people need an outlet to praise their Father God. **Our goal is heart-felt, compassionate responses to a God worth everything we own.** When people worship there will always be enough for the work of Jesus Christ to get done.

The next couple of chapters go over how the different aspects of the Tabernacle were put together, which we have looked at earlier in the message titled "A God of Promise". These chapters speak of the completion of the Tabernacle. Now look at **Exodus 39:32**:

32 And so at last the Tabernacle was finished. The Israelites had done everything just as the Lord had commanded Moses.*

2. The second way to worship God is to prepare.

They followed the instructions to a "T" because it was important to them. It's another example of how true worship doesn't demand it's own way, but responds to God according to God's expectations and conditions.

Worship doesn't come and tell God how he will be worshipped, but it asks God "how can I worship you today?" In fact, just as the Tabernacle was prepared for the presence of God, today, scripture tells us that we are the dwelling place of God, and so how are you preparing yourself for the presence of God in you. True worship is seen in the details. The path is just as important as the destination. The handling of the details of the Tabernacle was just as important as the finished product. Prepare yourself to worship God with your life and don't just sit back expecting everything to fall into place.

Finally, in **Exodus 40:34-38** speaks of the final fulfillment of the promise of God's dwelling among his people. Look at what it tells us:

34 Then the cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. 35 Moses could no longer enter the Tabernacle because the cloud had settled down over it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. 36 Now whenever the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out on their journey, following it. 37 But if the cloud did not rise, they remained where they were until it lifted. 38 The cloud of the Lord hovered over the Tabernacle during the day, and at night fire glowed inside the cloud so the whole family of Israel could see it. This continued throughout all their journeys.

I think the final lessons learned here about worship is that:

3. The third way to worship god is to follow him wherever he leads.

When the Tabernacle was finished and God's presence came and rested on that place, I am sure that there were many who were honored and relieved that God fulfilled his promises despite their lack of keeping their end of the deal. When God shows himself faithful to his word and people have experienced it for themselves, a heart of worship will follow God wherever he leads them.

There are going to be times that God will ask you for something you don't want to give up, or something you don't want to do, or something you don't understand, and the question is do you trust God enough to respond to him no matter what it may be? Yet God's faithfulness will always be with you, his presence will always go ahead of you.

Conclusion:

As we have looked at the book of Exodus, we have found many things to love about God: How he is a God ready to respond to our need, a God with a purpose for our lives, a God full of mercy and grace, a God who accepts us, a God who thinks of us and considers us, a God of action, a God of provision and growth, a God who makes us victorious and stand for justice, a God who draws close to us, a God of love, a God with a promise, and a God full of forgiveness. Now truly this God is one who is worth all of our time, all of our effort, all of our resources, and all of our heart so that we can be a true worshipper of him. Amen!