

Teaching for 7-9-08

Presence and Intimacy

Presence and intimacy are at the heart of God for His people. He longs for deep intimacy with each one of His children, the objects of His love. Presence and intimacy are together a theme that runs from the Garden of Eden to the New Jerusalem. One of the greatest books in Scripture to help us understand the subject of His Presence is the book of Exodus. In there we read about the wonderful way God manifested His Presence with Moses, with His people, and in the tabernacle. However, what we sometimes fail to see is that even in the Presence of God there are differing levels of intimacy with Him. We get a good picture of this in the 24th chapter of Exodus.

Divine Invitation

Exodus 24:1 starts out with an amazing invitation, *Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel.* This was a unique experience in the life of Israel. At no other point did the God of Glory invite a group to come and experience His Presence—but even with that, only Moses could actually approach the Lord, the others were instructed to worship from a distance. Though these men could not go all the way to the top of the mountain with Moses, this was still an invitation and an experience that few have had. Certainly, they were covered by the blood of sacrifice (vs. 3-8), but to see God, to eat and drink in His Presence (vs. 9) and not be consumed was an amazing demonstration of the desire of God to be present with His people.

Moses and Joshua

From this group of men, Moses took Joshua and went further up the mountain (vs. 13). This is a wonderful picture of the invitation of God to press into greater intimacy with Him. We are not told how far up the mountain Joshua was allowed to go, but it must have been a life-changing experience for him. The evidence of this is found later in Exodus 33:11 where we read these words, *The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.* In focusing on the relationship of Moses with God as friends, we may tend to overlook that last phrase in that verse, *but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.* Could it be that the experience of being on the mountain with God “ruined” Joshua to ever go back to life as usual? That is what happens when we experience that kind of intimacy with God—we will never be satisfied with anything less again.

Moses in the Cloud

Exodus 24:15-16 tells us that *When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and on the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from within the cloud.* For forty day and forty nights Moses was without food or water in intimate fellowship with the great I AM. It was in that time that God gave detailed instructions to Moses regarding the tabernacle and God’s requirements if He was to dwell in the midst of His

chosen people. There is no way on this side of glory that any of us will ever be able to imagine what that must have been like—intimate, raw, all-consuming fellowship with the thrice-holy God of the universe. After such an experience, it is no wonder that Moses did not dare to think of leading Israel anywhere without God's Presence going with them. Something happened to Moses during that time in the Presence of the Most High God, something that changed his life forever. Each one of us should aspire to be like Moses, to whom scripture speaks of in Deuteronomy 34:10a, *Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.*

Spoiled for Him

In our culture, even our church culture, many things draw us away from intimacy with God. His invitation is still the same for us today as it was for Moses and Joshua—leave the distractions of this world and enter into his Presence and experience deep and satisfying intimacy with Him. Nothing this world has to offer will ever satisfy the need He has placed within our hearts for intimacy with Him. Will you respond? Will you leave all behind and climb the mountain of the Lord and enter into His glorious Presence? If so, you will find that nothing else will satisfy and you will be spoiled for Him for eternity. He is worth it all!