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## **Exodus 33**

(2020)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Exodus 33.

(A brief overview of the main topics).

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### Topics.

- The LORD tells Moses to leave Mount Sinai.
- Moses goes to the land the LORD swore to give to Abraham's offspring.
- The LORD will drive the nations out of the land of Canaan.
- Moses and the tent of meeting and the pillar of cloud.
- The LORD speaks to Moses' face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.
- The LORD tells Moses His presence will go with him.
- The LORD'S glory passes by Moses as he stands in the cleft of the rock.
- Moses sees the LORD'S back but not his face.
- The Commonwealth of Israel and the glory of the temple that God is building in Christ.

**INTRODUCTION:** in the book of Exodus, God fulfilled His promise to Abraham by multiplying Abraham's descendants into a great nation delivering them from slavery in Egypt to journey to the Promised Land, and then binding them to Himself with a covenant at Mount Sinai. Moses, under the direct command of God and as leader of Israel, received the Ten Commandments from God, along with other laws governing Israel's life and worship. He also led the nation in building the Tabernacle, a place where God's presence can dwell among his people and where they can make sacrifices for sin. Most Jews and Christians recognise Moses as the author, writing sometime after the Exodus from Egypt (about 1445 B.C.). Note: the promise God made to Abraham will be perfectly fulfilled when Christ returns in glory and all those (Jews and Gentiles) who belong to God's Kingdom are gathered to him. (See also the introduction to chapter one).

**NOTE:** for information of people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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### EXODUS 33:1-3

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#### God's Promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

- **Exodus 33:1-3:** the LORD told Moses, "depart; go up from here (Mount Sinai) you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'to your offspring I will give it.' <sup>2</sup>I will send an Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>3</sup>go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people."

In the previous chapter the people had Aaron build them a golden calf and an altar before it and they not only worshipped it, but offered sacrifices to it so the LORD told Moses that He would not go with Israel, because they are such a proud and rebellious people and if for a single moment, He should go amongst Israel He would consume them.

Nevertheless, the LORD would send an angel to go before Israel to deliver them into the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey and to drive out the following six nations:

1. The Canaanites.
2. The Amorites.
3. The Hittites.
4. The Perizzites.
5. The Hivites.
6. The Jebusites.

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### EXODUS 33:4-6

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- **Exodus 33:4-6:** When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments. <sup>5</sup>For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, 'You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do with you.'"<sup>6</sup>Therefore the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward.

When the people mourned when they heard that the LORD would not go with them. The LORD told Moses to tell the people to take off their ornaments, this was most likely for the following three reasons:

1. To show that they had repented of their sin and that the LORD was more important to them than jewellery that flatters the ego and appeals to vanity.
2. Most of it was probably jewellery the Egyptians gave them as they fled Egypt and so it is very likely much of it symbolised the gods and idols of Egypt.
3. To make sure they could not build another golden idol to worship.

From the time the people departed from Mount Sinai they stripped themselves of their ornaments.

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### EXODUS 33:7-10

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- **Exodus 33:7-10:** Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off 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. <sup>8</sup>Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. <sup>9</sup>When 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. <sup>10</sup>And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door.

**The tent of meeting:** Moses would take the tent and pitch it outside the camp and a great distance from it he called it the Tent of Meeting. Everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the Tent of Meeting, which was outside the camp. Whenever Moses went to the Tent, the pillar of cloud would descend at the entrance of the Tent and the LORD would speak with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the Tent, they would stand at their tent door, worship and watch Moses until he had gone into the Tent. When Moses came back to the camp, his assistant Joshua (still a young man) would remain at the Tent (Exod. 33:1-23).

**Moses speaks to the LORD Face to Face.**

- **Exodus 33:11:** Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

the statement, "The LORD speaks to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Exod. 33:11) does not mean that Moses saw God's face we know this because the LORD tells Moses:

- God said to Moses, "You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." (Exodus 33:20).
- God said to Moses, "While my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen" (Exod. 33:22-23).

The expression, "the LORD speaks to Moses' face to face," carries the idea of endearment and intimacy. It is very much like someone who has an internet pen pal that they have never seen, but over time they get to know the person inside out and to explain to a friend how will they know the person, they say, "It's like I have seen them face to face." God spoke from the pillar of cloud, so He was not seen by Moses, but he did have a very unique and intimate relationship with God so much so that he was able to say he spoke with God face to face. We know this because

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**EXODUS 33:12-17**

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- **Exodus 33:12-17:** Moses said to the LORD, "See, you say to me, 'Bring up this people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' <sup>13</sup>Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people." <sup>14</sup>And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." <sup>15</sup>And he said to him, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. <sup>16</sup>For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?" <sup>17</sup>And the LORD said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name."

Notice the conversation Moses has with the LORD, one of the reasons why the Jews hold Moses up in such high esteem is because of the unique relationship he had with God.

Moses asks the LORD:

- To show him who will go with him as a leader.
- To show him His ways so he will find favour in his sight.
- To keep in mind Israel is His nation and His people.
- That His presence would go with Israel.

**NOTICE:** the underlying theme of all Moses questions is that he would know the way and the will of God so that he can do what is right for the people and what is right before God. This no-doubt is why God at the end of this conversation says that Moses found favour in His sight, and that He knows him by name (this carries the idea that the LORD knows Moses as a close and faithful friend).

**In verse sixteen:** Moses states that it is the fact that the LORD'S favour, blessing and presence goes with Israel that makes them distinct from all other nations. Had Israel remained faithful to God they would have been the head of all nations from generation to generation and He would have abundantly prospered and blessed them as a nation. Nevertheless, even though they rebelled against God they remain a unique and distinct nation amongst all other nations of the world and from every other people on the face of the earth for the following reasons:

God said:

- Israel was his son who he called out of Egypt and he loved them when they were a child (Hosea 11:1).
- He gave birth to Israel and carried them from the womb even to their old age (Isaiah 46:3-4).
- Israel is his allotted heritage (Deut. 32:9) and the apple of his eye (Deut. 32:10).
- Israel is a people holy to him (Deut. 7:6) and his treasured possession (Deut. 14:2).

The LORD has not spoken this way with any other nation, but God has not only spoken of Israel differently, but always dealt with them differently to any other nation:

- To Israel God gave the Ten Commandments and showed his great power.
- To Israel God declared his word, statutes and his rules.
- To Israel God gave the prophets, the worship and the promises.
- To Israel belonged the covenant, the adoption, the patriarchs and the glory.
- To Israel the oracles of God were entrusted.
- The people of Israel are the offspring of Abraham the father of faith.
- From Israel's race came the Christ the Saviour of the world.

The LORD has not given any other nations such great privileges.

(Exod. 19:5) (Deut. 7:6) (Deut. 14:2) (Deut. 26:18) (Deut. 32:9)  
(Isaiah 46:3-4) (Hosea 11:1).

These are the many reasons the Jews (especially the religious leaders of Jesus generation) considered themselves to be the holy and righteous race with God and the Gentile nations to be the unclean race without God. It is true that Israel has been and still is a special nation to God, but since Christ death and resurrection salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Israel remains a clear sign of where we are in prophecy concerning Christ's return. It could be said that they are the thermometer of God's prophecy much like the mercury on a natural thermometer measures the heat of the day and moves up the vertical red line warning us of impending danger when the heat of the sun is reaching temperatures that are dangerous for the good health of the skin.

Likewise, Israel can be seen as the mercury of Bible prophecy in the sense that world events that come upon the nation of Israel (especially Jerusalem) are signs that give us some insight as to how close we are to that glorious breathtaking and world changing day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory. But God's focus during our present age for eternal salvation is upon creating a new nation in Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles. This new nation is also called a new creation in Christ, the body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the church and the Kingdom of God. For further information concerning this new nation God is building in Christ see the title: "The Commonwealth of Israel," at the end of this chapter.

- **Exodus 33:18-23:** Moses said, "Please show me your glory." <sup>19</sup>And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. <sup>20</sup>But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." <sup>21</sup>And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, <sup>22</sup>and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. <sup>23</sup>Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."

Once again, we see the uniqueness of Moses relationship with the LORD, Moses has spent forty days on Mount Sinai with the LORD and now he asks the LORD to show to him His glory and the LORD agrees to show Moses his glory, but with the limitation that he will not see the LORD'S face. God's face speaks of His pure and absolute Holiness, God is pure light unlike us there is no darkness in God, this is why mankind cannot look upon the face of God and live. Darkness cannot survive light the moment a light is turned on a dark room the darkness is instantly dispelled and the brighter the light the more the darkness vanishes. When this principal is applied to sinful man entering without any covering into the pure light and holiness of God it becomes clear that the light of God would instantly destroy him because of the indwelling darkness of our fallen corrupted nature. This is why the LORD covered his face with his hand as he passed Moses and only allowed him to see his back, meaning that no man not even Moses is able to look upon the full glory of God.

The LORD'S words:

- I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy (Exod. 33:19).

God shows mercy to every sinner who come before Him in honest heartfelt repentance and accepts His plan of salvation and the following verses show that God also shows mercy to those who show mercy to others.

- With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless (2 Sam. 22:26).
- With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless (Psalm 18:25).
- Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (Matt. 5:7).

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## THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL

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It is important to understand that the promised seed of Abraham and David is Christ, all the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore they are not limited to Israel only but extend and embrace all those who belong to Christ because God is now creating one new nation in Christ made up of both Jew and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew) this means that Jews and Gentiles become one new nation in Christ (also called, a new man, a new creation, the church, the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God).

The Apostle Paul said:

- Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands— <sup>12</sup>remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the *COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL* and *STRANGERS* to the *COVENANTS* of *PROMISE*, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup>But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup>For

he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both *ONE* and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup>by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself *ONE NEW MAN* (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace, <sup>16</sup>and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in *ONE BODY* through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles). <sup>17</sup>And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews). <sup>18</sup>For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in *ONE SPIRIT* to the Father. <sup>19</sup>So then you (Gentiles) are *NO LONGER* strangers and aliens, but you are *FELLOW CITIZENS* with the *SAINTS* (the Jews) and members of the *HOUSEHOLD* of God, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone <sup>21</sup>in whom the *WHOLE STRUCTURE* being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup>In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a *DWELLING PLACE* for *GOD* by the Spirit (Ephes. 2:11-22).

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world.

#### **The practical application of what this means to you:**

If you belong to Christ, all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to you. The book of Revelation states: -

- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

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### **THE GLORY OF THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE GOD IS BUILDING IN CHRIST**

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Jews and Gentiles are being united together as one body in Christ to be a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Believing Jews and Gentiles are being prepared by the prophets and apostle's teachings and by the influence of Christ and the Holy Spirit to become a majestic and glorious sacred temple in which God dwells for all eternity. When this majestic building is completed there will be nothing so worthy of reverence since God dwells in it; so ancient since the patriarchs and prophets laboured in building it; so solid since love cements it together; so closely united and indivisible since Christ is the corner stone; so exalted since it reaches as high as heaven and to God himself; so full of wisdom since its specifications are the word of God; so full of light since the Holy Spirit dispels every dark corner; so spacious since it is spread over the whole earth; so invincible and indestructible since it is being built by God, by Christ, by the Holy Spirit and by the influence of God's eternal word; so divine since it is a living, vibrant, dynamic temple inhabited by the Holy Spirit and so universal since all its unique stones though spread throughout the world are compacted together in Christ. God is the master builder of this majestic and glorious temple; Christ is the corner stone; faithful believers are the proper materials; the prophets and apostles are its foundation and the Gospel and love its pillars. Christ is the door and faith is the entrance

into it. It is a spiritual building and through, faith and grace this living building is growing into an eternal house fit for the most Holy God to dwell in. It's beauty and radiance will surpass all temples that have ever gone before it since it will be adorned with a vast variety of rich colour made up of Jews and Gentiles of every age, country, sex, and condition: the mightiest of kings, the most renowned lawgivers, the most profound philosophers, the most eminent scholars and all those of whom the world was not worthy have formed this building.

Peter wrote:

- Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him Will not be put to shame (1 Pet. 2:6).

Every faithful brother and sister in Christ are represented as living stones that God is using to build this spiritual, majestic temple of eternal glory which will be manifested in splendour for all to see when:

- The Lord himself descends from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ are raised then we who are alive are caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:15-18).

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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