

## **HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR GOD?**

**19** In the third month after the children of Israel came out of Egypt—on that very day—they came into the wilderness of Sinai. **2**After they left Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the wilderness in front of the mountain. **3**Then Moses went up to God, and Jehovah called to him from the mountain and said, “This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and tell the children of Israel: **4**You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. **5**Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then out of all the nations you shall be my treasured possession, even though the whole earth is mine. **6**You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel.” **7**So Moses came back and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that Jehovah had commanded him to speak. **8**All the people responded together, “All that Jehovah has spoken, we will do.” Then Moses reported the peoples’ reply to Jehovah.

**9**Jehovah said to Moses, “I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and always put their trust in you.” Then Moses told Jehovah what the people had said. **10**Jehovah said to Moses, “Go back to the people and sanctify them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes **11**and be ready by the third day, because on the third day Jehovah will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. **12**You must set boundaries for the people all around the mountain and tell them, Be careful that you do not go up the mountain or even touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. **13**No hand is to be laid on him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with arrows. Whether man or beast, he shall not be permitted to live. Only when the ram’s horn sounds a long blast may they ascend the mountain.” **14**Then Moses went back down the mountain to the people and sanctified them; and they washed their clothes. **15**Then he said to the people, “Prepare yourselves for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations.”

**16**Then on the third day, when morning dawned, there was thunder and lightning, and a dense cloud was over the mountain, and there was a very loud trumpet blast. All the people who were in the camp trembled. **17**Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. **18**Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire. The smoke billowed up like smoke from a furnace and the whole mountain trembled violently. **19**When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him with a voice. **20**Jehovah came down upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain, and Jehovah called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. **21**Then Jehovah said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people so that they do not break through the barriers to gaze at Jehovah and many of them perish. **22**Even the priests, who routinely approach Jehovah, must sanctify themselves, or else Jehovah will break out against them.” **23**Moses said to Jehovah, “The people cannot ascend Mount Sinai, because you gave us a command, saying, “Set boundaries around the mountain and thereby sanctify it.” **24**Then Jehovah said to him, “Go down, then you shall come back up, bringing Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through the

barriers to come up to Jehovah, or else he will break out against them.” <sup>25</sup>So Moses went down to the people and told them.

**20** And God spoke all these words: <sup>2</sup>I am Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. <sup>3</sup>You shall have no other gods besides me. <sup>4</sup>You shall not make for yourself a carved image, nor any replica of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water below the earth. <sup>5</sup>You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I, Jehovah your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the iniquities of the fathers to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup>but showing lovingkindness to thousands of generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. <sup>7</sup>You shall not misuse the name of Jehovah your God; for Jehovah will not regard anyone who misuses his name as being guiltless. <sup>8</sup>Remember the Sabbath day, remember to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor and do all your work; <sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a Sabbath dedicated to Jehovah your God. On that day you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor the sojourner who is staying within your gates; <sup>11</sup>for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that they contain, and he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, Jehovah blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

<sup>12</sup>Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live a long life in the land Jehovah your God has given you. <sup>13</sup>You shall not murder. <sup>14</sup>You shall not commit adultery. <sup>15</sup>You shall not steal. <sup>16</sup>You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. <sup>17</sup>You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant or his female servant, or his ox or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

<sup>18</sup>When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain covered with smoke, they trembled with fear and stood at a distance. <sup>19</sup>They said to Moses, “You speak to us and we will listen. But do not let God speak to us or we will die.” <sup>20</sup>Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, in order that the fear of him may be always before you, so that you will not sin.” <sup>21</sup>The people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was. (Ex. 19:1-20:21)

## **Introduction**

Before committing yourself to marry someone, it is wise to first spend some time getting to know that person. As an old piece of advice puts it, “Date a man for four seasons before committing yourself to marrying him.” When contemplating a potential marriage partner, a Christian woman should be concerned to seek the answers to such questions as, Is he a Christian? What are his interests? What are his goals in life? Would he like to have a family? Can you trust him to be faithful to you and provide for you? What is he looking for in a wife? It’s important, as much as possible, to know that man before you marry him.

In the same way, if you are to have a true covenant relationship with God, it is necessary for you to really know Him, to appreciate both His lovingkindness as well as His awesome sacredness. Because He desires to be your God and receive you as one of His people, the LORD reveals to Israel, and to us, the fullness of His identity.

## **I. To Have a True Relationship with the LORD, You Must Appreciate His Love for You**

The LORD has brought Israel out of Egypt and down into the wilderness of Sinai, removed from the main stream of life, out in a desolate region, so that He might make His “proposal of marriage.” It is here that He invites Israel to enter into covenant with Him. When a young man proposes marriage to the girl he loves, he arranges for them to be alone in a quiet place apart from the distractions of the everyday world He may choose a quiet little restaurant, or a deserted stretch of beach, or a scenic hilltop. The LORD chose the wilderness of Sinai. In the days of the prophet Hosea, at a future time when Israel had forsaken Him, the LORD recalls the time when He “wooed” Israel at the base of Mt. Sinai, *“Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. ...<sup>15</sup>There she will respond as in the days of her youth, as in the days when she came up out of Egypt”* (Hosea 2:14-15.) The Lord Jesus Christ desires to call you away from the mainstream of life, with its frantic pace of work and recreation, to a quiet, solitary state of heart where He can gain your undivided attention and propose to you, (or, renew with you) His covenant. Sometimes the most effective way of gaining the attention of your heart is to bring you into “a wilderness experience” rather than “a vacation get-away.

Here in the isolated place of the wilderness of Sinai, the LORD reminds Israel of what He has done for them (vs. 4.) He declares, *“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians,”* referring to the devastating plagues, the collapsing of the Red Sea upon the pursuing Egyptian army—here was the exertion of Christ’s almighty power to redeem His people from the tyranny of Egypt and its gods. The greatest exertion of Christ’s almighty power to redeem us was accomplished at Calvary. There the Lord Jesus withstood the full force of temptation and endured the full weight of the awesome justice of God to redeem us from the tyranny of the devil and reconcile us to God His Father.

The LORD continues, *“[You have seen] ‘how I carried you on eagles’ wings.’”* Here is a picture of the LORD’s tender compassion: the eagle watches over its young by flying under them when it leads them from the nest, so that they will not fall upon the rocks below (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentaries on the Old Testament, The Pentateuch*, Vol. 2, p.96) At a later date, when Israel is encamped at the border of Canaan and is about to enter that Promised Land, Moses reminds them of the tender mercies of the LORD their God, *There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides on the heavens to help you and on the clouds in his majesty. <sup>27</sup>The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms* (Deut. 33:26-27a.)

Finally, the LORD concludes, “[I] *brought you to myself.*” The LORD’s whole purpose was to receive them and have them as His own treasured possession. In Ephesians 1:11-14, the Apostle Paul expands upon this divine purpose of salvation,

*... we were allotted to him, (having been predestined in accordance with the purpose of him who causes all things to work for the sake of his own plan), <sup>12</sup>in order that we, who previously hoped in Christ, should be for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup>You also [were allotted] to him—having heard the word of truth, that is, the gospel by which you are saved, and having believed in it, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. <sup>14</sup>He is a “deposit” guaranteeing our inheritance, until the redemption of [God’s] possession, to the praise of his glory.* Believing Jews and believing Gentiles together have been “allotted” to God, to be His own possession, and at present have been “sealed,” or, reserved, by the Holy Spirit, until the Lord comes to claim us as His own and take us into the fullness of His divine fellowship.

The LORD not only reminds Israel of what He has done for them, but also reveals the plan He has for them (vs. 6.) He begins by declaring, *“You will be for me a kingdom of priests.”* His divine purpose is not only that they be His subjects over whom He exercises His benevolent reign and bestows His divine protection; but also that they be His own personal servants (priests) who have the privilege of ministering to the Almighty, offering to Him the sacrifices of worship, praise, and devotion.

Furthermore, the LORD’s intention is that His people be *“a holy nation.”* That is to say, a people who are sacred: set apart for God and set apart to be like God Himself, in truth and purity and righteousness. The Apostle Peter states it in these terms when writing to New Testament believers,

*... you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people [appointed to be God’s] own possession, so that you might display the virtues of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup>Formerly you were not a people, but now you are the people of God (1 Peter 2:9-10a)*

This is God’s great purpose in redemption, namely, to have His people become the perfect reflection of His divine character and the object of His divine love throughout the endless ages of eternity.

The LORD has brought Israel out into the wilderness, apart from the bustling world, to propose His marriage covenant to them, ...and in order to encourage their acceptance, He reminds them of what He has done for them and reveals to them the good plan He has for them.

To have a true relationship with the LORD, you must appreciate His love for you.

Remember what He has done for you:

*... you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that although he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. (2 Cor. 8:9)*

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” (Gal. 3:13)*

Realize the plan and purpose he has for you:

*Father, I desire that those whom you have given me may also be with me where I am, so that they may see my glory—[the glory] that you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. (Jn.17:24)*

*To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. (Rev. 3:21)*

## **II. To have a True Relationship with the LORD, You Must Reverence His Sacredness**

In anticipation of meeting the LORD and entering into covenant with Him, the people must be *“sanctified”*—i.e.; purified and consecrated (Ex. 19:10-15.) They had to wash their garments (vs. 10)—symbolizing the washing away of their sins and presenting a pure life unto God. A similar picture of moral purity, and the only means of such purity, is presented in Revelation 7:14. Referring to the redeemed as they appear before the LORD, *“[The angel] said to me, ‘These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white by the blood of the Lamb.’”* Note: Old Testament Israel had been provisionally cleansed of sin by means of the sacrificed Passover lamb, a symbol of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the work of atonement He would accomplish by the sacrifice of His body upon the cross of Calvary. With the Passover lamb in mind, John the Baptist declared of Jesus, *“Behold, the lamb of God”* (Jn. 1:29.)

The people were also to abstain from sexual relationships (vs. 15)—symbolizing a desire to dedicate themselves to the LORD and become His holy bride. Once again, the Book of Revelation uses similar imagery with reference to the redeemed, with their devotion to Christ being symbolically represented as a “virginity,” *“These are the ones who have not defiled themselves with women; they are male virgins. They are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes”* (Revelation 14:4a.)

Furthermore, Moses was commanded to erect a barrier around the base of Mt. Sinai, preventing any living being from ascending the mount on pain of death (Ex. 19:12-13.) The erecting of the barrier was intended to symbolize the



sacredness of the LORD. Moses personally encountered this sacredness when he met the LORD at the burning bush. Upon approaching the bush, Moses was warned, *"Do not come near. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground"* (Ex. 3: 5.) Many centuries later, when Isaiah is called to the prophetic ministry, he is brought into the immediate presence of the LORD and is made to behold His absolute holiness: *"I saw the LORD seated on a throne, high and exalted ... Above him were the seraphs ... and they were calling to one another, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory'"* (Isa. 6:1-3.)

On the morning of the third day, the day appointed for the people to meet God, *"there was thunder and lightning, and a dense cloud was over the mountain, and there was a very loud trumpet blast"* (Ex. 19:16.) As Exodus 19:18 explains, *"Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire. The smoke billowed up like smoke from a furnace and the whole mountain trembled violently."* Here the LORD God the Almighty revealed Himself in His awesome majesty.

When God spoke to the people from the heights of Mt. Sinai He gave to them His holy commandments (Ex. 20:1-17.) Here is the demand that His holy moral character be honored and be reproduced in the lives of His people. The Apostle Peter exhorts the New Testament Christian to likewise remember our holy calling,

*As obedient children, no longer conform to the passions you formerly [had when you lived] in ignorance. <sup>15</sup>But just as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup>because it is written, 'Be holy, because I am holy.'*" (1 Pet. 1:14-16)

When, with trembling, the people request that Moses communicate the Word of God to them, rather than they being directly exposed to the presence of God (Ex. 20:18-19,) Moses comforts them with these words, *"Do not be afraid. God has come to test you."* Moses assures them that the LORD's intention is not to destroy them, but rather to determine if you really want a relationship with Him. The people must realize that they are about to enter into a covenant with none other than the living God, who, by His very nature, is the God of infinite holiness. Moses goes on to explain to the people that the LORD's purpose in so revealing Himself in His holiness and majesty is *"in order that the fear of him may be always before you, so that you will not sin."* The LORD desires to instill in His people the grace of godly fear, which leads to obedience and blessing. Note what the LORD will express as His desire for His people: *"Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commandments always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!"* (Deut. 5:29.) Together with the grace of devoted love for Him, the LORD employs the grace of godly fear to bind us to Himself, as He declares in Jeremiah 32:38-40,

*They shall be my people, and I will be their God. <sup>39</sup>I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them. <sup>40</sup>I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. (Jer.32:38-40)*

To have a true relationship with the LORD, you must reverence His awesome sacredness.

*... if you call upon the Father who judges impartially according to each one's work, live your remaining time [on earth] in fear, <sup>18</sup>knowing that you were redeemed from your futile way of life handed down from your forefathers—not by perishable things, such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup>but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish or defect, [the blood] of Christ. (1 Pet. 1:17-19)*

*... as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him ... <sup>13</sup>As a father has compassion on his children, so Jehovah has compassion on those who fear him ...<sup>17</sup>... from everlasting to everlasting Jehovah's love is with those who fear him ... (Psl. 103:11,13,17a)*

## **Conclusion**

If you are going to have a true covenantal relationship with God—the kind that lasts for eternity in the kingdom of heaven—it is necessary for you to really know Him. Because He desires to be your God and receive you as one of His people, the LORD reveals to you the fullness of His divine identity. To have a true and lasting relationship with the LORD, you must 1) appreciate His love for you; and, 2) reverence His divine sacredness.