**THE LORD IN THE TABERNACLE**

Sunday School Lesson 12

*Wandering in the Wilderness*

Exodus 33

3/23/2025

**Lesson Review:** Last week, we looked at part two of our study on the golden calf. In this lesson, we focused on God’s and Moses’ response to the people’s wicked behavior. Even while speaking to Moses, the Lord \_\_\_\_\_\_ the behavior of the people. Specifically, He saw that the people were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ themselves. He also saw the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ condition of the people. The Lord was ready to deal with the people. Yet, even while speaking judgment to Moses, the Lord was still ready to show \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He had a righteous \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ toward Israel, and they deserved to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. While God told Moses to let Him alone, He was obviously willing to hear Moses’ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ on behalf of the people. In speaking to the Lord on behalf of the people, Moses focused on God’s holy \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and on His faithful \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Although the Lord showed mercy to the children of Israel, His justice still demanded for there to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. When Moses came down from the mount, he was quick to carry out \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ on the people. He started by having them \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the golden calf. He then ordered the Levites to go and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ three thousand men of Israel. Finally, God also chastened the people by sending \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ upon them. For today’s lesson, we are going to look at the Lord’s visit to the tabernacle of Israel:

1. **THE LORD WITHHELD HIS PRESENCE FROM THE STUBBORN CHILDREN OF ISREAL.**
2. **Notice that while the Lord reiterated His promise to Israel, He was not going to go in the midst of them.** *Exodus* *33:2-3 And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: 3 Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way. Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.* Even after the golden calf incident, the Lord remained faithful to His covenant. He told Moses He would still send the people into the promised land. However, He would not go up in their midst, because their rebellion had distanced them from Him. God's holiness cannot dwell among unrepentant sin without judgment. This separation was not a breaking of God’s covenant but a demonstration that sin disrupts fellowship with a holy God. His presence would not accompany them as closely as before.
3. **Notice that while the people were stiffnecked toward the Lord, they were still grieved when they saw that His presence was not going to be with them.** *Exodus 33:4 And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments. 5 For the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. 6 And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.* When the people heard that God would not dwell among them, they were grieved. They removed their ornaments as an act of mourning. Unfortunately, they wanted the presence of God, but they wanted it on their own terms. They did not want to be obedient to His commands. They did not want to honor Him in their worship and praise. Many Christians behave the same way today. They want the benefit of God’s presence, but they are not willing to separate themselves unto God.
4. **THE LORD MANIFESTED HIS PRESENCE IN THE TABERNACLE OUTSIDE THE CAMP.**
5. **Notice that the people could go out of the camp and see God’s presence in the tabernacle.** *Exodus 33:7 And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp. Jeremiah 29:13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.* Despite the necessary separate between the people and God’s presence, the Lord in His great mercy still made Himself available. Anyone who sincerely sought the Lord could go outside the camp to see the cloudy pillar descend upon the tabernacle. This revealed that while sin creates distance, access to God is still possible when we humble ourselves and seek Him where He can be found. This is symbolic of the general separation that took place between God and man after the fall.
6. **Notice that the people stood by to observe as Moses went before the presence of God.** *Exodus 33:10 And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door.* *Psalm 95:2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.* When the Lord met with Moses, the people stood at the entrances of their tents and watched. They saw the cloudy pillar descend and recognized that God’s presence was truly there. Though they could not enter the tabernacle themselves, they were eyewitnesses of God’s nearness and Moses’ relationship with Him. The reaction of the people seems like progress from their previous reactions. They did not run in fear at the presence of God. They stood in awe of Him, and they actively worshipped Him. Moses provides us with an example of what the Christian should be to those who do not know the Lord. Our closeness to His presence should draw those without to see Him and come to Him.
7. **MOSES HAD A STRONG DESIRE TO BE AND STAY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD.**
8. **Notice that Moses was unwilling to move forward without the presence of the Lord going with him.** *Exodus 33:13 Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. 14 And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. 15 And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. Psalm 16:11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.* Moses was very eager to see the glory of the Lord. He reassured Moses by letting him know that His presence would be there with him. Moses’ response shows just how hungry he was to be there with the Lord. He asked the Lord not to carry the people up to the promised land if His presence wasn’t going to go with them. This is the type of hunger that we ought to have for the Lord in our life.
9. **Notice that Moses saw that God’s grace was manifested through His presence being there with them.** *Exodus 33:16 For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. 17 And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.* It wasn’t just that Moses wanted the presence of the Lord. He saw the presence of the Lord as the favor of God. What good was the promised land without God’s presence there? Many people assess God’s grace and blessing through the “things” that God gives to them. The greatest thing that we can have is to be in the presence of God. What good would eternal life be without the presence of God there with us? We need to value the presence of God. We must see it as God’s blessing toward us.
10. **Notice that even after Moses saw God’s presence, He desired to see more of the Lord.** *Exodus 33:11a And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. 18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. 19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. 20 And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.* The Lord had spoken face to face with Moses as with a friend. This does not mean that Moses saw God’s face, but it does speak to a very personal conversation that they had together. Moses was not content with this though. He desired more from the Lord. The Lord then told Moses twice that He knew him by name. This was meant to reassure Moses of their closeness. Still, this was not sufficient for Moses. He wanted to see God’s glory. As a result, the Lord allowed Moses to get a glimpse of His actual physical appearance. May we continually crave more closeness with the Lord. May we desire to see Him everywhere and in everything!