

Exodus 29

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[0 : 0 0] What would it take for God to suddenly settle among us on the matter of what it would require of us? What if God were to show up? What if he were to come down? What if he were to dwell?

What if he were to manifest his presence in your own life with all of its complexities? What if God settled in your home with all of its challenges? What if today God were to be among your extended family or our city? Really, what would be required for God to make his dwelling among us? We don't normally ask the question from that perspective. In other words, we're not normally thinking about what preparations we would need to make for him to arrive. Rather, it's much more common for us to think of other questions. For instance, with all the stuff that is going on in my life, within my family, within my extended home, within my neighborhood, within the city in which I live, within the world in which I read about, the real question is, why hasn't he come down? Why hasn't he showed up? Why doesn't he dwell?

Well, in our minds anyway, this is the conversation we play. We wonder, is God deaf? He must be, not to know what's really going down. Is God blind? It's possible that he is, given what I see, given what he fails to fix. You see, we are used to putting the obligations for the preparation of him settling in our midst upon him, not upon us. You and I are not all that reflective when it comes to questions of how might I need to be prepared for God to dwell in my midst.

From our perspective, we're ready. We're waiting. We're wondering, why doesn't God suddenly settle among us? Israel, in ancient days, according to the reading of our text, had recently been freed from slavery in Egypt. In other words, God had showed up in ways that saved them from an oppressive life. And now, this summer, we've been seeing how God has been speaking to them. But this particular text, 29, you see clearly that his intention was not merely to save them and speak to them. His intention was to settle among them, to come down, to dwell, not just to show and go, no meet and greet, but to make his abode with a people. Take a look at the end of the chapter, the final part of that reading today, and you'll see that the desire of God in the heavens is to do the very thing we wish he would do. That is, suddenly settle. Take a look at verse 43.

Then I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory. I will consecrate the tent of meeting, and the altar. Aaron, also in his sons, I will consecrate to serve me as priest.

[4 : 4 9] Here we go. I will dwell among the people of Israel, and be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God. He's saying, this is my intention. My intention is to come. My intention is to settle.

The chapter then explains what's required. Did you see how the chapter opened? It's this setting apart of a particular class of people. They become priests. As well as the setting apart of not just a a people to mediate his dwelling, but a place where he can come. The opening words of the text, now this is what you shall do to them, to consecrate them. That is a word that is going to appear at least 13 times in the text in various forms. To set them apart. It's the same word that you're going to see when it talks about things that are actually holy as opposed to things that are profane. Things that are consecrated. Things that are set apart are holy things and holy places.

And so all the way through the text, we are learning the answer to the question, what is required for God to suddenly settle? The answer is this. Certain people are going to have to be set apart, made holy.

And there's got to be a place where I can actually inhabit because I'm holy. That's God, see? He answers very different questions than we answer. Let me put it to you where you can get it.

God's not your homeboy. He's not a homie. He's saying, you're not anywhere near ready for me to walk in behind your door. I can't walk in behind your door because that place is a mess.

[7 : 13] God's not your homeboy. He's saying, you're not a homie. He's saying, you're not a homie. We sit here and say, where are you and when will you be?

And he says, from my vantage point, something's going to have to be done. And so there's the chapter.

The setting apart. Of priests. To mediate his presence. The setting apart. Of a place.

Where he can actually inhabit. Given the beauty. Of his character. I've thought about the way the material is organized.

Let me see if I can. Help you see it. I know it's hard when you hear it read to see the subtleties of the symmetry. But it's really beautiful.

[8 : 21] In verses 1 to 9, you have the sense of some class of people is going to be consecrated. And they are going to receive a priesthood as a priesthood.

As a statute forever. That a priestly mediating class is going to represent the presence of God among the people. And then you begin to see what's required to make them ready for the work.

There's in verses 10 through 28, a religious ceremony. There's a ritual that took place on a particular day.

And it dealt with a bull and a couple of rams. In other words, there was a day set aside to get these people ready.

Then when you move to verses 29 to 37, that day gives way to seven days. So there is a one-time event.

[9 : 30] The shedding of blood on a bull and a couple of rams. But that day is going to be recapitulated over seven days.

So that when it's set apart, it's set apart in all of its fullness. And then the seven days gives way in verses 38 to 42.

Well, by the way, now that you've had your day. Now that you've had seven days. Let me tell you what it's going to require of you day by day. Another lamb every morning and a lamb every evening.

What does it take for God to settle? Put it differently. It's going to take a day of blood. It's going to take seven days of blood.

It's going to take perpetual blood. A ritual.

[10 : 40] 10 to 28. An entire week. 29 to 37. A way of life. 38 to 42.

Take a look at the opening movement.

That day. That religious ceremony that's put forward in verses 10 to 28. Notice the bull in verses 10 to 14 is killed.

And the blood is placed on the altar itself. Notice what it's called at the end of verse 14. A sin offering.

God cannot dwell with us unless there is an offering for sin made. It stands alone.

[11 : 37] But then notice those rams which have various functions. The first ram. With its blood thrown on the place.

But notice what it's called at the end of verse 18. It's a pleasing aroma. It's a food offering. And then it moves to the second ram.

Verses 19 through 28. Or 18. Beginning at verse 19. You shall take the other ram.

And they lay their hands on that ram. And that ram. The blood now is placed upon the people itself for it to be set apart. Even their garments.

Blood thrown upon the garments that they would be holy. Evidently we don't just come into the presence of God any old way.

[12 : 37] There's a sin offering that's made. There's a food offering that's made. You'll see the pleasing line on verse 25. The aroma that goes up before the Lord on that second one again is a food offering to the Lord.

And then there's another offering. You take the breast of the ram in verses 26 and following. And that is consecrated.

And it's a wave offering. So do you get the sense of how this chapter is moving? God is saying, I intend to be among you. I want to dwell with you. I've saved you. I've spoken to you. I want to walk with you.

But this is what it's going to require. An offering for sin will be made. An offering that's a food offering that a sense is pleasing before Him. This offering that signifies fellowship with God.

And then there's a wave offering. All has to be done. And then He moves on in the text and begins to lay out that that which you do on that day is now going to come with a fullness to it.

[13 : 43] Almost like it's not just going to be a day. It's going to represent all of creation. It's going to represent seven days of this. I really intend to be with you fully, completely, finally, throughout the generations.

I'm in a sense going to bring a recreated order. And it all gets translated out over seven days. And then when you move to verses...

By the way, I just went to the eye doctor this week. I can't wait for my new glasses to arrive. Verse 38, Now this is what you shall offer on the altar.

Two lambs a year old day by day. That there is a perpetual sacrifice of lambs that permits the presence of God to remain among the people.

That's what it takes. God says, I'm coming. I love you. I've saved you. I want to be with you. It's going to take some blood. It's going to take some more blood.

[14 : 56] It's going to take a lot of blood after the blood. What do we do with this? I want you to see what the New Testament does with it.

I want you to look at Hebrews. And I want you to see something in chapter 7. And in verses 26 and 27.

Where we read, For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, speaking of Jesus, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all, when he offered up himself.

I once had a Christmas card. It had a picture of a home among homes. It was an urban-like setting. And the caption was something to the effect of, Merry Christmas.

[16 : 10] You know, the word became flesh and moved into the neighborhood. In other words, God settled in our midst through the coming of his Son. And Jesus does, one time, what this perpetual shedding of blood could never fully accomplish.

is to make adequate atonement for the indwelling sin that I can't get rid of in any religious, ritualistic way.

This is, in a sense, then, the core of the gospel message that we find God settling into our life, settling into my marriage, settling into my home, settling into my city, not by external things which I do, but by a one-time sacrifice made by his Son that's applied to my life on my behalf, wherein his Spirit now dwells within me.

Think of it. Think of it. These old priests were set apart by blood. Jesus was set apart by the Holy Spirit. He had the living Spirit within him that enabled him to accomplish work, and that Spirit is promised to us if we trust in his sacrifice for our sin.

That's the gospel as I understand it. The good news that you don't come into a relationship with God by doing a lot of things.

[17 : 57] You come by trusting in the one death that satisfies, from God's perspective, atonement for your sins.

He is the sin offering. He is the burnt offerings. You know, we move then from this text in regard to Israel to Jesus, and I want to spend the rest of the time just thinking about ourselves and how does this apply?

What does this mean for us? I think of the words that David wrote in Psalm 51. I just, if you have your Bible, it's a familiar psalm.

But what does God require of you? If you're wondering, where is God in my life and what do I got to do to get him? You have to ask yourself, well, what kind of sacrifice is he looking for from you?

Well, what Psalm 51 says in verse 9, hide your face from my sins, blot out all my iniquities. In other words, it says, God, you need to do something for me.

[19 : 07] Look at what he wants him to do. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

He's asking God to do something on his behalf from the inside out. Look at verse 16.

For you will not delight in sacrifice or I would give it. You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.

O God, you will not despise. You want God to do something in your life this week because it's off the rails? How do you get him in motion?

You need him to actually do something within your heart to clean out. Give me a sin offering, O God. And to trust that that sin offering is sufficient through the death of Christ and to pray that that spirit then would begin to recreate something within you where your heart would begin to change.

[20 : 18] And what kind of sacrifice does he want from you? He wants nothing more than a broken and contrite heart. He wants nothing more than for you to say, help me.

Take a look at it from Psalm 50's perspective. What does he want from us? What does he want from us? Look at verse 12.

God speaking. If I were hungry, I would not tell you for the world in its fullness are mine. In other words, I don't need anything from you. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?

This is what he says. Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and perform and perform your vows to the most high. If you want God to be active in your life, the edge of your anger on where is he needs to recede and words of thanksgiving need to be offered.

It's a sacrifice of thanksgiving. If the death of Christ received by faith is sufficient for your sin offering, the day by day sacrifices that are required of you and me, the obligations of our soul, what we owe God is thanksgiving.

[21 : 53] That's what we owe. Isn't it interesting then that Romans 1, if you haven't read that letter, it begins to say that it's because we did not honor Him as God or give thanks.

It's because we're not thankful to God that the wreckage of life rolls out from His throne. And so the first sign of someone who's actually seeing God active in their life is the words of agitation, frustration, anger, I'm ready, I'm willing, I'm waiting, where are you?

Receive and out from your lips comes a simple word, Lord, give me a different heart and give me words that would demonstrate that I'm a thankful person, that I'm a gracious person, that I'm a kind person.

Let me say thank you to you, oh God of the universe. That's what you owe Him. Do that and see if He doesn't start walking with.

Let me put it to you this way. He doesn't want your rigorous asceticism. He doesn't want you all screwed up religiously and ready to go.

[23 : 18] He doesn't want you living legalistically in the sense of I've got to get this done, I've got to do this, I've got to do this, I've got to get the right kind of...

No. Look at the book of Colossians. Read the book of Colossians if that's the trap you're in because Colossians answers this dilemma, doesn't it? Colossians is an interesting letter. It sounds a lot like some of the other epistles, but there's a distinct difference.

The people in Colossae were struggling in regard to how God continues to settle among them. And they had decided that they were going to pass judgment on people, chapter 2, verse 14 or 15, in regard to questions of food or drink or festivals.

They were going to do religiosity. They had decided that they were going to get to God's favor by submitting to rules and regulations.

Look at 2.20. If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why as if you are still alive in the world do you submit to regulations? Do not handle. Do not taste. Do not touch.

[24 : 22] Referring to things that are perished as they're used according to human precepts and teachings. They appear to have wisdom, but in the other sense they don't have it at all.

And the uniqueness of Colossians is it substitutes rigorous asceticism as a way of reaching God's ear with thankfulness. It's the unique distinction in this letter from other letters that sound just like it.

Look at chapter 1 and verse 12. What does he want them to do right away? He's praying that they would be people who are giving thanks. Take a look at how that beautifully begins to roll out in chapter 2 verse 4 or 6.

Therefore as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord so walk in Him rooted and build up in Him and established in faith just as you were taught abounding in thanksgiving. See, he is trying to squash religiosity and replace it with simple thanksgiving.

You can take a look at it even further. It's in every chapter. Take a look at chapter 3 and verse 15. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which you were called in one body. And then he says, and be thankful.

[25 : 32] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another with all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thanksgiving. He doesn't just want your song today after this sermon.

He wants it with thanksgiving. Take a look there at verse 17. And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks.

Chapter 4 verse 2. Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. This is the epistle's great theme. Oh, church of Christ, longing for God to settle in.

He will. He will. When you begin to give thanks. I don't know what you got going on this week, but I know that we're all pretty good at making a hash of our own life.

We all want God to show up, to settle down, to walk with. Then you need to have a sin offering that you can taste.

[26 : 54] And you need to have lips that begin to express gratitude. And life then begins to change.

Your spirit begins to be reoriented. The embittered nature of life and relationships begins to be broken. Forgiveness is able to be extended.

Peace is willingly sought. We've got a table called, the Eucharist called, named, Thanksgiving.

You want God to settle in today? Then, then, then this is your meal. This is your food offering.

This is your, Thanksgiving is your wave offering. day by day, give thanks to the Holy One.

[27 : 57] But today, I invite you to the table. If you are trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, then this meal is for you. If you have a broken and contrite heart and are beginning now to understand that you don't work your way to God, that He's actually come and settled among us and done what you cannot do and the change He'll bring is from the inside out, then this table actually strengthens you.

You take that in faith, I believe the Lord Jesus Christ begins to strengthen you according to His purposes for your life. If you do not know Christ, then the table of thanksgiving isn't for you.

You'll find your own way into His presence. But for all who have tried that and failed, well, may we then graciously, patiently wait upon our own opportunity to taste and see that the Lord is good.

And may we then walk forward with praise and thanksgiving to His name. The way we normally do it here is you come down the center aisle if you would like to receive the table in faith.

And there are little baskets on the outside where you can place the cup. That said, our congregation is growing and if there are more people coming forward than cups are here, then we'll show you a cup and you can dip your bread into that and partake as well.

[29 : 42] And I would ask that you just be patient again, just like for the reading of the Word. Hey, it's Sunday. And believe it or not, I'm in no hurry.

You got the rest of the week to check your phone and get it all done. We're not here all that long. I'm going to ask you this morning, though, just as a sense of order, if you want to partake of the Lord's table and you're seated near the rear, maybe we'll let you folks start coming first.

And then as that wave begins to come forward, those who are closer to the front can stand and enter the line. And I would just say, watch and look and recall that as people are partaking of these elements, as they drink of this juice and their head goes to the sky, they are taking on a belief in faith that Christ's blood would shed for them as a once-for-all sin offering.

They don't need to do anything else to get rid of their sin. And that they are partaking of that bread in the sense of, I am walking with you and you with me.

May you be unto me the bread of life this week. what a beautiful thing to see. We'll see people from all backgrounds coming to the same table.

[31 : 08] We'll see Thank you.