

ENCOUNTER:

MEANING OF ENCOUNTER; verb: unexpectedly experience or be faced with something difficult or hostile. Noun: an unexpected or casual meeting with someone or something.

1. To meet as an adversary or enemy. 2. To engage in conflict with. 3. To come upon face-to-face. To come upon or to experience especially unexpected difficulties.

EXODUS 3:2-4; TURN ASIDE AND SEE.

“And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

3 And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

4 And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.”

When Moses had his encounter, he turned to see. When he turned, he got his assignment to go back to the place from where he ran away forty years ago. He ran away in his strength, now he was going under the authority of Jehovah.

When he turned to see, he turned from being a shepherd of sheep to be the shepherd of God’s people. It caused him to go back to the most powerful Pharaoh to tell him to let God’s people go free from bondage. He turned away from the smell of sheep to the grumbling of God’s people.

When he turned to see, it changed his life forever.

When he turned to see, it allowed him to fulfill his purpose. When Moses turned to see he had his encounter with the living God, who revealed Himself to him and gave him his new vocation.

EZRA 8:22; LOOK UP TO GOD

22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

EZRA FEARED AN ENCOUNTER WITH BANDITS ON HIS JOURNEY:

Ezra was commissioned to return to Jerusalem to help in the restoration by teaching the people the laws of God and help them to start worshiping God in their homeland.

The Israelites were in captivity in Babylon for 70 years. They were freed by Cyrus the king of Babylon to return and build the temple to their God.

Ezra led the second phase of returning Israelites in the rebuilding of Jerusalem. His responsibility was more of a spiritual rebuilding than the physical rebuilding. He anticipated an encounter with bandits on his journey, however; he refused to ask the king to provide him with a military escort for his protection, because previously he testified to the king that his God protects those who are His. He was witnessing to the king that he believed what he told him about his God, therefore; he was relying on Him to protect them and guide them safely from Babylon to Jerusalem.

He anticipated an encounter which would affect him and those in his group negatively. He looked up. He looks to Jehovah for protection from the enemy (the bandits whose history recorded their frequent attacks on travelers.)

He put his trust and confidence in Jehovah and encouraged his group to do likewise. He invited them to join with him in a fast and to seek Him for their protection for their journey.

GENESIS 12:1-4; LOOK FORWARD TO GOD'S PROMISES

1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

Abraham had an encounter with God, who made him a promise to give him a land, bless him, and make him the father of a great nation. When he had his encounter, he left his family and homeland and looked away, by looking and moving forward. Genesis 3a says Abraham departed. He went forward by faith, trusting God, not knowing where he was going.

His encounter dictated action. Abraham looked away by looking ahead and going forward, he departed. He trusted God and by faith he believed His promises.

Moses turned aside to see. He received his call to lead God's people, but he had to go back to the place from where he ran, in order to fulfill his purpose.

Ezra anticipated an encounter, he looked up to God, trusted Him and encouraged those who he was leading to join him in call on the Lord for their protection. God protected them and they reached Jerusalem safely.

An encounter will always take us into the unknown, physically, emotionally or Spiritually. I pray that during this weekend, each of us will have our encounter with Jesus. We have turned away from our regular activities to be here. May each of us look up to Him to guide us, as we exercise

our faith in trusting God, as moving forward and away from some familiar things and places, and go in obedience on His promises and see the plans He has for us.

May our lives never be the same after this weekend.

ACTS 9:1-9; CHANGE OF PURPOSE:

Saul made havoc on the early churches, his zeal caused him to go everywhere persecuting Christians because he sincerely believed he was doing the right thing for God. His actions teach us that we can be sincere in both our motives and actions and yet, deadly wrong. He persecuted Christians and saw to it that they were put in prison because they trusted in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. When Stephen, the first Christian martyr was stoned to death, his clothes were placed at Saul's feet.

He went to the high priest in Jerusalem and obtained letters to go to Damascus and seek for Christians to take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. Acts 9:1-2

While he was on his way he had an Encounter; Acts 9:3-4

3 "And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

An encounter with God is personal. Saul was not traveling alone, he had other men with him, all saw the light from heaven, and all heard the voice that spoke to him. The voice addressed him by name. The voice asked him why he was persecuting Him. This shows that whatever we do to one of God's people good or bad we are doing it unto Jesus. He was persecuting Christians, the voice asked him, "Why he was persecuting Him.

With that ENCOUNTER, Saul fell from his horse to the ground and was struck with blindness. His response was “What will you have me to do Lord” He then acknowledged Jesus as Lord. Then in response to his question Jesus told him to continue his journey to Damascus where he would be instructed what he should do. Notice he did not have to change either his direction or his destination, but his purpose. He was no longer going to Damascus to imprison Christians but to be instructed by a Christian by the name Ananias.

He continued in his blinded state to Damascus, where he fasted and prayed for three days. The Lord spoke to Ananias and told him where he should go and minister to Saul, because Saul was praying and saw in a vision of him coming to him and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight. Acts 9:11-12.

Ananias obediently went as he was instructed and went to Saul and gave Saul the answer to his question, when he asked, “What will you have me to do”. He was told that he was a chosen vessel to bear the name of God to the gentiles, kings and the children of Israel. He was also chosen to suffer for his faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Acts 9:15-16

OBSERVATION: Saul’s Encounter was dramatic. There was a bright light from heaven. All saw the light and heard the voice that spoke but none saw the person who spoke.

The voice addressed Saul, not his traveling companions.

The light was bright, Saul was struck with blindness until he could see the light of the truth of the gospel.

Jesus asked him why he was persecuting Him.

Saul acknowledged Jesus as Lord.

Saul was willing to do what Jesus wanted him to do.

Saul was humbled, he had others lead him by the hand.

He continued on his journey to Damascus, not to persecute Christians, but to be told by a Christian what the Lord would have him do.

When he got to Damascus his purpose was changed, instead of persecuting Christians, he fasted and prayed for three days.

When Ananias went to see Saul, his eyes were opened, both physically and Spiritually.

Instead of persecuting Christians, he would be preaching to both Jews and Gentiles.

He would be a witness before kings that Jesus is the Messiah.

He was chosen not only to preach the gospel but to suffer because he was preaching the gospel.

Your Encounter may not be as dramatic as Saul's, but I pray that you will have your encounter

with the Lord. It will be personal, and your response will be like Saul's. He was willing to do

what the Lord would have him do, and he did just that. He did not delay. He did not consult with

anyone, he did no wait to go to Bible College, immediately he started preaching. His change was

so dramatic that many doubted his sincerity, because all knew that his purpose for going to

Damascus was to persecute Christians. They doubted because they questioned the sincerity of his

change of purpose. An encounter with God should cause a change in the individual.

Can you recall an encounter you experienced.?