

The Mystery of the Abiding Presence of God

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Part 1

The more I study God's dealing with man and the parameters within which He reveals himself, the more God seems to highlight His very specific path. His interactions with man are based on covenants. It is within the context of covenant He reveals himself. Covenants are negotiated and vary in depth. The depth of His revelations depends on the depth of His specific covenant with that person, people or nation.

The first phase is always the introduction where God proves Himself to the potential covenant partner. When the potential covenant partner is in complete awe of God, He then takes them to the next phase. The second phase is negotiating and accepting the terms of covenant. Covenants come in phases and will progress deeper depending on the obedience of the covenant partner.

Abram for example, was sent to Canaan with wonderful covenant promises. See Genesis 12:2-3. Abram obeyed God and followed the given instructions. After he got there, God added another layer, giving him the Land (Genesis 12:7). His responsibility now that he was in the land? Walk the length and breadth of the land to lay claim to it with a network of altars. He was also to teach his household after the ways of God. God waited for Abram to conform to these before moving on the final stage of Abram's destiny...having biological children.

It is with those same descendants God visited in Egypt and brought them out to himself at Mount Sinai after testing and proving Himself to them at the waters of Marah and again between Elim and Sinai. The first test addressed their thirst for water. The second test addressed their need for food. He provided both for this vast group of people in the dry and barren wilderness.

He brought them to Himself as the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob but needed to covenant with them now as the nation of Israel. God introduced Himself personally to the three patriarchs as the God Almighty. To Isaac, He introduced himself as the God of his father Abraham. To Jacob, He called Himself the God of Abraham and Isaac. Later after Jacob knew and could differentiate between Him and all the other gods, God called himself "the God who met you at Bethel." He was careful to be known by the people expected to walk with Him.

Although God had the platform to legally claim the descendant of Abraham as His own through the covenant initiated with the patriarchs, He needed to covenant Himself with this new people. Covenants are very specific and are designed to fulfill specific purposes. The old covenant with the patriarchs did not cover them fulfilling His purposes in the nations. It stipulated He would give them the land and to bless all the nations of the earth through them. For that purpose, God would need to personally introduce Himself again to this nation to make covenant with them.

This process began with Moses. We see God working behind the scenes in Moses' life preparing him for 80 years. His first 40 years were spent immersed in the Egyptian culture seeing the world through the eyes of an Egyptian. This was necessary for him to understand the mindset and cultural constraints of the people he was to lead. The next 40 years were spent in the wilderness being stripped of that same

mindset of Egypt. He had to learn the ways of the wilderness as he was going to be there with a vast multitude of people leading them for the next 40 years.

God took covenant with Moses to another level. It was necessary for Moses to learn more about this God. Where the patriarchs were enamored by their Almighty God, Moses needed more. God gave Moses a name not mentioned before in scripture. He called himself the I AM.

He began the introduction in Egypt to clearly differentiate Himself from all the other gods. Jehovah was careful to demonstrate to all that He knew that the gods of Egypt has power. In His presence however, all the gods are nothing but an afterthought. They are powerless to even speak when He is at work.

He also had a bigger plan. Israel, as His first born of the nations, were to be His tool to draw all the other nations to Himself. He therefore used this opportunity to begin to introduce himself to the rest of the nations. How better to do this than to raise up a nation as the world power, put it on stage with the attention of the nations, then shake it from heaven while everyone was watching (Exodus 9:16). Was the world paying attention? Did they see His show? Look at the battle of Aphek recorded in the book of 1 Samuel 4:7-8.

The philistines were in the audience as God demonstrated His power. They saw and remembered. The story was handed down through the generations and the wise men paid attention. Even though they worshiped Dagon, the leadership knew there was the great God who can shake nations. They also knew His was covenanted to this nation of Israel, their declared enemy.

At mount Sinai, God began by sharing a layer of His plans with them then asked for agreement. Next He sought and received agreement for Him to come and speak with them personally. This was a huge deal for Israel. They were accustomed to seeing gods interact with humans. In Egypt, the many gods worked through their priesthood. They also knew from their ancestors that the Almighty God did speak with man. This was their opportunity to hear and interact with their God themselves instead of hearing through Moses.

It was in the preparation to meet with this God that they began to realize the price. The required two days of consecration was only the beginning. He even required a fence around the mountain as a physical barrier to prevent trespass. God guard His presence well.

The encounter itself was much more than they bargained for. Moses stood as the priest among them and initiated the conversation. God responded by an audible voice then came down on the mountain. The nation was introduced to their God in a close encounter while He spoke to them 10 foundational principles that would thereafter govern their lives. He also discussed with Moses a supplementary set of principles that governed how His covenanted people were to interact with each other.

Note well, even though the experience terrified them, it was still up to them to agree to the terms of the covenant. God would not go further unless they agreed. Listen to their response after He asked for the leadership to come up to the mountain and covenant the nation to His terms: *So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgements. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "all the words the Lord has said we will do."* Exodus 24:3

The very next day Moses built a symbolic altar, gathered the people again and read the terms of covenant to them a second time. Their reply? *And they said, "All that the Lord had said, we will do and*

be obedient." Exodus 24:7. It is with this firm pledge that Moses led the elders up to the mountain for a covenant meal with God.

With that level of Covenant secured, God now began to reveal over the then next 7 chapters (Exodus 25-31) to Moses the mysteries of drawing His presence and creating a place for His abode among them. This level of revelation was only available within the confines of this level of covenant.

Over the next 40 years during Moses leadership, Israel as a nation experienced the abiding presence of God resting on the tabernacle. The cloud of His glory was among them for all to see. Experiencing it however, was limited to those with the individual covenants that permitted them to go beyond the veil or enter the cloud.

New Covenant

What about the new covenant initiated by Master Jesus? Jesus came to earth as a covenanted Son of God. After His baptism and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Him, Jesus went about building a team of disciples who would leave all to walk with Him in this covenant.

Among the multitudes, Jesus performed all sorts of miracles ministering to the needs of the people. What was He doing? Proving Himself to them that He was the promise sent from His Father. What did He want from them? Believe! That would equate to them repenting of their own ways and returning to the Father in covenant position.

The people willingly received the blessings; enjoyed being around the great teacher and listened attentively to his teaching. He however kept setting the terms of covenant to the nation waiting for them to receive it so He could take them to the next level.

listen to Jesus assessment and proclamation on the three first cities where His ministry was focused. *Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works has been done, because they did not repent: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgement than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to the heavens, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of the judgement than for you.* Matthew 11:20-24

Did Israel accept covenant as a nation? Listen to his passionate plea to them: *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!* Matthew 23:37

They had the temple, the laws of Moses, theological seminaries, and committed leadership zealous for the purposes of God in their day. Yet as a nation, they not only rejected covenant with God, they persecuted anyone who did.

Now hear the account of one of those who did accept the covenant. *He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* John 1:10-13

It was to this small group of people who heard His terms of covenant and accepted them that He shared His secrets. *And the disciples came and said to Him, "why do you speak to them (the multitudes) in parables?" He answered and said to them, "because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.* Matthew 13:11

Jesus most intimate teaching was done in this small group of covenant partners, far away from the multitudes. This sharing began in John 13 when He knew His time had come. He spent the next 5 chapters pouring out His heart to His disciples about the mysteries of walking in covenant position with the Father. He then closed this fantastic sharing going to His Father in prayer on their behalf. Listen carefully to these amazing promises and the conditions.

If you love me, keep my commands. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever- the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for dwells with you and will be in you. John 15:15-17

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. John 14:21

One of the disciples asked him a follow up question to this above statement: *"Lord, how is that You will manifest Yourself to us and not the world?" Jesus answered and said unto him, "If anyone loves Me, He will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent me.* John 14:22-24

You are my friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from my father I have made known to you. John 15: 14-15

No covenant equals to no presence of God. Are there people who covenanted and still do not experience the promised presence? Yes. The terms of the covenant have to be met.

What about you?

Here is a check list to analyze whether you are walking in Covenant or not.

- Is the Holy Spirit a reality in your life?** *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.* Romans 8:14, ...Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. Romans 8:9
- Has Jesus manifested Himself to you?** *He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.*
- Do you live in the abiding presence of God with Him and His Son?** *If anyone loves Me, He will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and will come to him and make Our home with him.*
- Has Jesus revealed to you the secrets of the Fathers heart?** this is a position reserved only for those walking in that level of covenant. This is the position equal to Moses standing in the cloud of God's presence.

What if I cannot check all those boxes?

Having proved Himself to you and extended terms of covenant, He is standing, waiting for you to respond to Him. *Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with me.* Revelations 3:20. The next move is up to you

Humbly begin to seek the face of the God who made these promises of His abiding presence with man and ask Him about your life. Don't settle.