

God Appears To Man

He Was Made Flesh

And Dwelt Among Us

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God Appears To Adam.

Genesis 3:8-21

Toward evening they heard the Lord God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. [9] The Lord God called to Adam, “Where are you?”

[10] He replied, “I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.”

[11] “Who told you that you were naked?” the Lord God asked. “Have you eaten the fruit I commanded you not to eat?”

[12] “Yes,” Adam admitted, “but it was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit, and I ate it.”

[13] Then the Lord God asked the woman, “How could you do such a thing?”

“The serpent tricked me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”

[14] So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, you will be punished. You are singled out from all the domestic and wild animals of the whole earth to be cursed. You will grovel in the dust as long as you live, crawling along on your belly. [15] From now on, you and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

[16] Then he said to the woman, “You will bear children with intense pain and suffering. And though your desire will be for your husband, he will be your master.”

[17] And to Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate the fruit I told you not to eat, I have placed a curse on the ground. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. [18] It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. [19] All your life you will sweat to produce food, until your dying day. Then you will return to the ground from which you came. For you were made from dust, and to the dust you will return.”

[20] Then Adam named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all people everywhere. [21] And the Lord God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

Study notes:

These verses show God's desire to have fellowship with us. They also show why we are afraid to have fellowship with him. Adam and Eve hid from God when they heard him approaching. God wanted to be with them, but because of their sin, they were afraid to show themselves. Sin had broken their close relationship with God, just as it has broken ours.

But Jesus Christ, God's Son, opens the way for us to renew our fellowship with him. God longs to be with us. He actively offers us his unconditional love. Our natural response is fear because we feel we can't live up to his standards. But understanding that he loves us, regardless of our faults, can help remove that dread.

Adam and Eve failed to heed God's warning recorded in 2:16,17. They did not understand the reasons for his command, so they chose to act in another way that looked better to them. All of God's commands are for our own good, but we may not always understand the reasons behind them. People who trust God will obey because God asks them to, whether or not they understand why God commands it.

When God asked Adam about his sin, Adam blamed Eve. Then Eve blamed the serpent. How easy it is to excuse our sins by blaming someone else or circumstances. But God knows the truth, and he holds each of us responsible for what we do (see 3:14-19).

Admit your wrong attitudes and actions and apologize to God. Don't try to get away with sin by blaming someone else.

Adam and Eve chose their course of action (disobedience), and then God chose his. As a holy God, he could respond only in a way consistent with his perfect moral nature. He could not allow sin to go unchecked; he had to punish it.

If the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin seem extreme, remember that their sin set in motion the world's tendency toward disobeying God. That is why we sin today: Every human being ever born, with the exception of Jesus, has inherited the sinful nature of Adam and Eve (Romans 5:12-21). Adam and Eve's punishment reflects how seriously God views sin of any kind.

Adam and Eve learned by painful experience that because God is holy and hates sin, he must punish sinners. The rest of the book of Genesis recounts painful stories of lives ruined as a result of the fall. Disobedience is sin, and it breaks our fellowship with God. But, fortunately, when we disobey, God is willing to forgive us and to restore our relationship with him.

anything he can to get us to follow his evil, deadly path. The phrase "you will strike his heel" refers to Satan's repeated attempts to defeat Christ during his life on earth. "He will strike your head" foreshadows Satan's defeat when Christ rose from the dead. A strike on the heel is not deadly, but a blow to the head is. Already God was revealing his plan to defeat Satan and offer salvation to the world through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Adam and Eve's disobedience and fall from God's gracious presence affected all creation, including the environment. Years ago people thought nothing of polluting streams with chemical wastes and garbage. This seemed so insignificant, so small. Now we know that just two or three parts per million of certain chemicals can damage human health. Sin in our lives is similar to pollution in streams. Even small amounts are deadly.

Life in the Garden of Eden was like living in heaven. Everything was perfect, and if Adam and Eve had obeyed God, they could have lived there forever. But after disobeying, Adam and Eve no longer deserved paradise, and God told them to leave. If they had continued to live in the garden and eat from the tree of life, they would have lived forever.

But eternal life in a state of sin would mean forever trying to hide from God. Like Adam and Eve, all of us have sinned and are separated from fellowship with God. We do not have to stay separated, however. God is preparing a new earth as an eternal paradise for his people (see Revelation 21-22).

This is how Adam and Eve broke their relationship with God: (1) They became convinced their way was better than God's; (2) they became self-conscious and hid; (3) they tried to excuse and defend themselves. To build a relationship with God we must reverse those steps: (1) We must drop our excuses and self-defenses; (2) we must stop trying to hide from God; (3) we must become convinced that God's way is better than our way.

God appears to Abraham.

Genesis 18:2-33

He suddenly noticed three men standing nearby. He got up and ran to meet them, welcoming them by bowing low to the ground. [3] "My lord," he said, "if it pleases you, stop here for a while. [4] Rest in the shade of this tree while my servants get some water to wash your feet. [5] Let me prepare some food to refresh you. Please stay awhile before continuing on your journey."

"All right," they said. "Do as you have said."

[6] So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, "Quick! Get three measures of your best flour, and bake some bread." [7] Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a fat calf and told a servant to hurry and butcher it. [8] When the food was ready, he took some cheese curds and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them there beneath the trees.

[9] "Where is Sarah, your wife?" they asked him.

"In the tent," Abraham replied.

[10] Then one of them said, "About this time next year I will return, and your wife Sarah will have a son."

Now Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent nearby. [11] And since Abraham and Sarah were both very old, and Sarah was long past the age of having children, [12] she laughed silently to herself. "How could a worn-out woman like me have a baby?" she thought. "And when my master—my husband—is also so old?"

[13] Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, 'Can an old woman like me have a baby?' [14] Is anything too hard for the Lord? About a year from now, just as I told you, I will return, and Sarah will have a son." [15] Sarah was afraid, so she denied that she had laughed. But he said, "That is not true. You did laugh."

[16] Then the men got up from their meal and started on toward Sodom. Abraham went with them part of the way.

[17] "Should I hide my plan from Abraham?" the Lord asked. [18] "For Abraham will become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. [19] I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the Lord and do what is right and just. Then I will do for him all that I have promised." [20] So the Lord told Abraham, "I have heard that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah are extremely evil, and that everything they do is wicked. [21] I am going down to see whether or not these reports are true. Then I will know."

[22] The two other men went on toward Sodom, but the Lord remained with Abraham for a while. [23] Abraham approached him and said, "Will you destroy both innocent and guilty alike? [24] Suppose you find fifty innocent people there within the city—will you still destroy it, and not spare it for their sakes? [25] Surely you wouldn't do such a thing, destroying the innocent with the guilty. Why, you would be treating the innocent and the guilty exactly the same! Surely you wouldn't do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?"

[26] And the Lord replied, "If I find fifty innocent people in Sodom, I will spare the entire city for their sake."

[27] Then Abraham spoke again. "Since I have begun, let me go on and speak further to my Lord, even though I am but dust and ashes. [28] Suppose there are only forty-five? Will you destroy the city for lack of five?"

And the Lord said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five."

[29] Then Abraham pressed his request further. "Suppose there are only forty?"

And the Lord replied, "I will not destroy it if there are forty."

[30] "Please don't be angry, my Lord," Abraham pleaded. "Let me speak—suppose only thirty are found?"

And the Lord replied, "I will not destroy it if there are thirty."

[31] Then Abraham said, "Since I have dared to speak to the Lord, let me continue—suppose there are only twenty?"

And the Lord said, "Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty."

[32] Finally, Abraham said, "Lord, please do not get angry; I will speak but once more! Suppose only ten are found there?"

And the Lord said, "Then, for the sake of the ten, I will not destroy it."

[33] The Lord went on his way when he had finished his conversation with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his tent.

Study notes:

We all know that there are consequences to any action we take. What we do can set into motion a series of events that may continue long after we're gone. Unfortunately, when we are making a decision, most of us think only of the immediate consequences. These are often misleading because they are short-lived.

Abraham had a choice to make. His decision was between setting out with his family and belongings for parts unknown or staying right where he was. He had to decide between the security of what he already had and the uncertainty of traveling under God's direction.

All he had to go on was God's promise to guide and bless him. Abraham could hardly have been expected to visualize how much of the future was resting on his decision of whether to go or stay, but his obedience affected the history of the world. His decision to follow God set into motion the development of the nation that God would eventually use as his own when he visited earth himself.

When Jesus Christ came to earth, God's promise was fulfilled; through Abraham the entire world was blessed. You probably don't know the long-term effects of most decisions you make. But shouldn't the fact that there will be long-term results cause you to think carefully and seek God's guidance as you make choices and take action today?

"Is anything too hard for the LORD?" The obvious answer is, "Of course not!" This question reveals much about God. Make it a habit to insert your specific needs into the question.

"Is this day in my life too hard for the Lord?" "Is this habit I'm trying to break too hard for him?" "Is the communication problem I'm having too hard for him?" Asking the question this way reminds you that God is personally involved in your life and nudges you to ask for his power to help you.

Sarah lied because she was afraid of being discovered. Fear is the most common motive for lying. We are afraid that our inner thoughts and emotions will be exposed or our wrongdoings discovered. But lying causes greater complications than telling the truth and brings even more problems. You will be far better off telling the truth right from the start.

Did Abraham change God's mind? Of course not. The more likely answer is that God changed Abraham's mind. Abraham knew that God is just and that he punishes sin, but he may have wondered about God's mercy. Abraham seemed to be probing God's mind to see how merciful he really was. He left his conversation with God convinced that God was both kind and fair. Our prayers won't change God's mind, but they may change ours just as Abraham's prayer changed his. Prayer helps us better understand the mind of God.

Why did God let Abraham question his justice and intercede for a wicked city? Abraham knew that God must punish sin, but he also knew from experience that God is merciful to sinners. God knew there were not 10 innocent people in the city, but he was merciful enough to allow Abraham to intercede. He was also merciful enough to help Lot, Abraham's nephew, get out of Sodom before it was destroyed. God does not take pleasure in destroying the wicked, but he must punish sin. He is both just and merciful. We should be thankful that God's mercy extends to us.

God gave the men of Sodom a fair test. He was not ignorant of the city's wicked practices, but in his fairness and patience he gave the people of Sodom one last chance to repent. God is still waiting, giving people the opportunity to turn to him (2 Peter 3:9). Those who are wise will turn to him before his patience wears out.

Was God being unfair to the people of Sodom? Did he really plan to destroy the innocent with the guilty? On the contrary,

God's fairness stood out:

- (1) He agreed to spare the entire city if only 10 innocent people lived there.
- (2) He showed great mercy toward Lot, apparently the only man in the city who had any kind of relationship with him (and even that was questionable).

(3) He showed great patience toward Lot, almost forcing him to leave Sodom before it was destroyed.

Remember God's patience when you are tempted to think he is unfair. Even the most godly people deserve his justice. We should be glad God doesn't direct his justice toward us as he did toward Sodom.

God showed Abraham that asking for anything is allowed, with the understanding that God's answers come from God's perspective. They are not always in harmony with our expectations, for only he knows the whole story. Are you missing God's answer to a prayer because you haven't considered any possible answers other than the one you expect?

God appears to Jacob

Genesis 35:7-9

Jacob built an altar there and named it El-bethel, because God had appeared to him there at Bethel when he was fleeing from Esau.

[8] Soon after this, Rebekah's old nurse, Deborah, died. She was buried beneath the oak tree in the valley below Bethel. Ever since, the tree has been called the "Oak of Weeping."

[9] God appeared to Jacob once again when he arrived at Bethel after traveling from Paddan-aram. God blessed him

Study notes:

God appeared to Jacob. He renewed the covenant with him. I am God Almighty, God all-sufficient, able to make good the promise in due time, and to support thee and provide for thee in the meantime.

Two things are promised; that he should be the father of a great nation, and that he should be the master of a good land. These two promises had a spiritual signification, which Jacob had some notion of, though not so clear and distinct as we now have. Christ is the promised Seed, and heaven is the Promised Land; the former is the foundation, and the latter the top-stone, of all God's favours.

God appear to Moses in a burning bush.

Exodus 3:2

Suddenly, the angel of the Lord appeared to him as a blazing fire in a bush. Moses was amazed because the bush was engulfed in flames, but it didn't burn up.

Study Notes

What a contrast between Moses' life as an Egyptian prince and his life as a Midianite shepherd! As a prince he had everything done for him; he was the famous son of an Egyptian princess.

As a shepherd he had to do everything for himself; he was holding the very job he had been taught to despise (Genesis 43:32; 46:33, 34), and he lived as an unknown foreigner.

What a humbling experience this must have been for Moses! But God was preparing him for leadership. Living the life of a shepherd and nomad, Moses learned about the ways of the people he would be leading and also about life in the wilderness. Moses couldn't appreciate this lesson, but God was getting him ready to free Israel from Pharaoh's grasp.

Mount Sinai is the place where God would give the people his revealed law, known today as the Ten Commandments (3:12; 19:1-20:21).

God spoke to Moses from an unexpected source: a burning bush. When Moses saw it, he went to investigate. God may use unexpected sources when communicating to us too, whether people, thoughts, or experiences. Be willing to investigate, and be open to God's surprises.

Moses saw a burning bush and spoke with God.

Many people in the Bible experienced God in visible (not necessarily human) form. Abraham saw the smoking firepot and flaming torch (Genesis 15:17); Jacob wrestled with a man (Genesis 32:24-29).

When the slaves were freed from Egypt, God led them by pillars of cloud and fire (13:17-22). God made such appearances to encourage his new nation, to guide them, and to prove the reliability of his verbal message.

At God's command, Moses removed his sandals and covered his face. Taking off his shoes was an act of reverence, conveying his own unworthiness before God. God is our friend, but he is also our sovereign Lord.

To approach him frivolously shows a lack of respect and sincerity. When you come to God in worship, do you approach him casually, or do you come as though you were an invited guest before a king? If necessary, adjust your attitude so it is suitable for approaching a holy God.

God appeared to Moses on Mt. Sinai

Exodus 19:11-14

Be sure they are ready on the third day, for I will come down upon Mount Sinai as all the people watch. [12] Set boundary lines that the people may not pass. Warn them, 'Be careful! Do not go up on the mountain or even touch its boundaries. Those who do will certainly die! [13] Any people or animals that cross the boundary must be stoned to death or shot with arrows. They must not be touched by human hands.' The people must stay away from the mountain until they hear one long blast from the ram's horn. Then they must gather at the foot of the mountain."

[14] So Moses went down to the people. He purified them for worship and had them wash their clothing.

Study notes:

Moses was told to consecrate the people. This meant getting them physically and spiritually ready to meet God.

The people were to set themselves apart from sin and even ordinary daily routine in order to dedicate themselves to God. The act of washing and preparing served to get their minds and hearts ready.

When we meet God for worship, we should set aside the cares and preoccupations of everyday life. Use your time of physical preparation to get your mind ready to meet God.

God appeared to Moses and to Joshua.

Deut. 31:14-15

Then the Lord said to Moses, "The time has come for you to die. Call Joshua and take him with you to the Tabernacle, and I will commission him there." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the Tabernacle. [15] And the Lord appeared to them in a pillar of cloud at the entrance to the sacred tent.

Study notes:

The laws were to be read to the whole assembly so that everyone, including the children, could hear them. Every seven years the entire nation would gather together and listen as a priest read the law to them. There were no books, Bibles, or newsstands to spread God's word, so the people had to rely on word of mouth and an accurate memory. Memorization was an important part of worship because if everyone knew the law, ignorance would be no excuse for breaking it. To fulfill God's purpose and will in our lives, we need the content and substance of his Word in our hearts and minds. For the Hebrews, this process began in childhood. Teaching our children and new believers should be one of our top priorities. Our finest teachers, best resources, and most careful thought should be directed toward showing young believers how to follow God in all life's situations.

Joshua had been appointed to take over the leadership of Israel and guide the people into the Promised Land (Moses could not enter the land due to his disobedience—Numbers 20:12). Joshua, first mentioned in Exodus 17:9, had been Moses' assistant for many years (Joshua 1:1).

One of his key qualifications was his faith. As one of the 12 scouts to first enter Canaan, only he and Caleb believed that God could help Israel conquer the land (Numbers 13:1-14:30). Moses told Joshua to be strong and courageous twice in this chapter (31:7, 23). Indeed, this was a frightening task with three million people to care for, settle disputes for, and lead into battle. Finding courage would be Joshua's greatest test. He was strong and courageous because he knew God was with him and because he had faith that God would do all he had promised Israel.

God appeared to Israel.

Judges 2:1-5

The angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bokim with a message for the Israelites. He told them, "I brought you out of Egypt into this land that I swore to give your ancestors, and I said I would never break my covenant with you. [2] For your part, you were not to make any covenants with the people living in this land; instead, you were to destroy their altars. Why, then, have you disobeyed my command? [3] Since you have done this, I will no longer drive out the people living in your land. They will be thorns in your sides, and their gods will be a constant temptation to you." [4] When the angel of the Lord finished speaking, the Israelites wept loudly. [5] So they called the place "Weeping," and they offered sacrifices to the Lord.

Study Notes:

This event marks a significant change in Israel's relationship with God. At Mount Sinai, God made a sacred and binding agreement with the Israelites called a covenant (Exodus 19:5-8).

God's part was to make Israel a special nation, to protect them, and to give them unique blessings for following him. Israel's part was to love God and obey his laws. But because they rejected and disobeyed God, the agreement to protect them was no longer in effect.

But God wasn't going to abandon his people. They would receive wonderful blessings if they asked God to forgive them and sincerely followed him again.

Although God's agreement to help Israel conquer the land was no longer in effect, his covenant to make Israel a nation through whom the whole world would be blessed (fulfilled in the Messiah's coming) remained valid. God still wanted the Israelites to be a holy people (just as he wants us to be holy), and he often used oppression to bring them back to him, just as he warned he would (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28).

The book of Judges records a number of instances where God allowed his people to be oppressed so that they would repent of their sins and return to him.

Too often people want God to fulfill his promises while excusing themselves from their responsibilities. Before you claim God's promises, ask, have I done my part?

The people of Israel knew they had sinned, and they wept loudly, responding with deep sorrow. Because we have a tendency to sin, only repentance is the true measure of spiritual sensitivity.

Repentance means not only confessing sins and asking God to forgive us, but also abandoning our sinful ways. But we cannot do this sincerely unless we are truly sorry for our sinful actions.

Tears alone are not enough. When we are aware that we have done wrong, we should admit it plainly to God rather than try to cover it up or hope we can get away with it.

God appeared to Gideon

Judges 6:11-24

Then the angel of the Lord came and sat beneath the oak tree at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash of the clan of Abiezer. Gideon son of Joash had been threshing wheat at the bottom of a winepress to hide the grain from the Midianites. [12] The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "Mighty hero, the Lord is with you!"

[13] "Sir," Gideon replied, "if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? Didn't they say, 'The Lord brought us up out of Egypt'? But now the Lord has abandoned us and handed us over to the Midianites."

[14] Then the Lord turned to him and said, "Go with the strength you have and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you!"

[15] "But Lord," Gideon replied, "how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!"

[16] The Lord said to him, "I will be with you. And you will destroy the Midianites as if you were fighting against one man."

[17] Gideon replied, "If you are truly going to help me, show me a sign to prove that it is really the Lord speaking to me. [18] Don't go away until I come back and bring my offering to you."

The Lord answered, "I will stay here until you return."

[19] Gideon hurried home. He cooked a young goat, and with half a bushel of flour he baked some bread without yeast. Then, carrying the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, he brought them out and presented them to the angel, who was under the oak tree.

[20] The angel of God said to him, "Place the meat and the unleavened bread on this rock, and pour the broth over it." And Gideon did as he was told. [21] Then the angel of the Lord touched the meat and bread with the staff in his hand, and fire flamed up from the rock and consumed all he had brought. And the angel of the Lord disappeared.

[22] When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the Lord, he cried out, "Sovereign Lord, I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!"

[23] "It is all right," the Lord replied. "Do not be afraid. You will not die." [24] And Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and named it "The Lord Is Peace." The altar remains in Ophrah in the land of the clan of Abiezer to this day.

Study notes:

The Old Testament records several appearances of the angel of the Lord: Genesis 16:7; 22:11; 31:11; Exodus 3:2; 14:19; Judges 2:1; 13:3; Zechariah 3:1-6.

It is not known whether the same angel appeared in each case. The angel mentioned here appears to be separate from God in one place (6:12) and yet the same as God in another place (6:14).

This has led some to believe that the angel was a special appearance of Jesus Christ prior to his mission on earth as recorded in the New Testament. It is also possible that as a special messenger from God, the angel had authority to speak for God. In either case, God sent a special messenger to deliver an important message to Gideon.

Threshing was the process of separating the grains of wheat from the useless outer shell called chaff. This was normally done in a large area, often on a hill, where the wind could blow away the lighter chaff when the farmer tossed the beaten wheat into the air.

If Gideon had done this, however, he would have been an easy target for the bands of raiders who were overrunning the land. Therefore, he was forced to thresh his wheat in a winepress, a pit that was probably hidden from view and that would not be suspected as a place to find a farmer's crops.

Gideon questioned God about the problems he and his nation faced and about God's apparent lack of help. What he didn't acknowledge was the fact that the people had brought calamity upon themselves when they decided to disobey and neglect God. How easy it is to overlook personal accountability and blame our problems on God and others.

Unfortunately, this does not solve our problems. It brings us no closer to God, and it escorts us to the very edge of rebellion and backsliding.

When problems come, the first place to look is within. Our immediate response should be confession to God of sins that may have created our problems.

"I will be with you," God told Gideon, and God promised to give him the strength he needed to overcome the opposition. In spite of this clear promise for strength, Gideon made excuses. Seeing only his limitations and weaknesses, he failed to see how God could work through him.

Like Gideon, we are called to serve God in specific ways. Although God promises us the tools and strength we need, we often make excuses. But reminding God of our limitations only implies that he does not know all about us or that he has made a mistake in evaluating our character. Don't spend time making excuses. Instead, spend it doing what God wants.

Why was Gideon afraid of seeing an angel? The Israelites believed that no one could see God and live (see God's words to Moses in Exodus 33:20). Evidently Gideon thought this also applied to angels.

God appeared to Solomon

1 Kings 3:5

That night the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream, and God said, "What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!"

Study notes

But many Israelites, including Solomon, made sacrifices in the surrounding hills. Solomon loved God, but this act was sin. It took the offerings out of the watchful care of priests and ministers loyal to God and opened the way for false teaching to be tied to these sacrifices. God appeared to Solomon to grant him wisdom, not during the sacrifice, but at night. God honored his prayer but did not condone the sacrifice.

1 Kings 9:2

Then the Lord appeared to Solomon a second time, as he had done before at Gibeon.

Study notes:

God warned Solomon, now he had newly built and dedicated the temple, that he and his people might not be high-minded, but fear.

After all the services we can perform, we stand upon the same terms with the Lord as before. Nothing can purchase for us liberty to sin, nor would the true believer desire such a license.

He would rather be chastened of the Lord, than be allowed to go on with ease and prosperity in sin.

1 Kings 11:9

The Lord was very angry with Solomon, for his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.

Study notes

Solomon didn't turn away from God all at once or in a brief moment. His spiritual coldness started with a minor departure from God's laws (3:1). Over the years, that little sin grew until it resulted in Solomon's downfall.

A little sin can be the first step in turning away from God. It is not the sins we don't know about but the sins we excuse that cause us the greatest trouble. We must never let any sin go unchallenged.

In your life, is an unchallenged sin spreading like a deadly cancer? Don't excuse it. Confess this sin to God and ask him for strength to resist temptation.

2 Chron. 7:12-22

Then one night the Lord appeared to Solomon and said, "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this Temple as the place for making sacrifices. [13] At times I might shut up the heavens so that no rain falls, or I might command locusts to devour your crops, or I might send plagues among you. [14] Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land. [15] I will listen to every prayer made in this place, [16] for I have chosen this Temple and set it apart to be my home forever. My eyes and my heart will always be here.

[17] "As for you, if you follow me as your father, David, did and obey all my commands, laws, and regulations, [18] then I will not let anyone take away your throne. This is the same promise I gave your father, David, when I said, 'You will never fail to have a successor who rules over Israel.'

[19] "But if you abandon me and disobey the laws and commands I have given you, and if you go and worship other gods, [20] then I will uproot the people of Israel from this land of mine that I have given them. I will reject this Temple that I have set apart to honor my name. I will make it a spectacle of contempt among the nations. [21] And though this Temple is impressive now, it will become an appalling sight to all who pass by. They will ask, 'Why has the Lord done such terrible things to his land and to his Temple?' [22] And the answer will be,

'Because his people abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who brought them out of Egypt, and they worshiped other gods instead. That is why he brought all these disasters upon them.' "

Study notes:

2 Months, maybe years, had passed since Solomon's prayer of dedication (chapter 6). Several other building projects had been completed after the Temple (7:11; 8:1). Then after all this time, God told Solomon that he had heard Solomon's prayer.

How often do we look for immediate answers to our prayers and, when nothing happens, wonder if God has heard us? God does hear, and he will provide for us. We must trust that God will answer at the proper time.

Solomon asked God to make provisions for the people when they sinned.

God answered with four conditions for forgiveness:

- (1) Humble yourself by admitting your sins,
- (2) Pray to God, asking for forgiveness,
- (3) Seek God continually, and
- (4) Turn from sinful behavior. True repentance is more than talk—it is changed behavior.

Whether we sin individually, as a group, or as a nation, following these steps will lead to forgiveness. God will answer our earnest prayers.

God appeared to Isaiah

Isaiah 6:1-5

In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. [2] Hovering around him were mighty seraphim, each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with the remaining two they flew. [3] In a great chorus they sang, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty! The whole earth is filled with his glory!" [4] The glorious singing shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire sanctuary was filled with smoke. [5] Then I said, "My destruction is sealed, for I am a sinful man and a member of a sinful race. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!"

Study notes:

Isaiah's vision was his commission to be God's messenger to his people. Isaiah was given a difficult mission. He had to tell people who believed they were blessed by God that God was going to destroy them because of their disobedience.

Isaiah's lofty view of God in gives us a sense of God's greatness, mystery, and power. Isaiah's example of recognizing his sinfulness before God encourages us to confess our sin. His picture of forgiveness reminds us that we, too, are forgiven. When we recognize how great our God is, how sinful we are, and the extent of God's forgiveness, we receive power to do his work. How does your concept of the greatness of God measure up to Isaiah's?

The throne, the attending seraphim (angels), and the threefold *holy* all stressed God's holiness. Seraphim were a type of angel whose name is derived from the word for "burn," perhaps indicating their purity as God's ministers.

In a time when moral and spiritual decay had peaked, it was important for Isaiah to see God in his holiness. *Holiness* means "morally perfect, pure, and set apart from all sin." We also need to discover God's holiness. Our daily frustrations, society's pressures, and our shortcomings narrow our view of God.

We need the Bible's view of God as high and lifted up to empower us to deal with our problems and concerns. God's moral perfection, properly seen, will purify us from sin, cleanse our mind of our problems, and enable us to worship and to serve.

Seeing the Lord and listening to the praise of the angels, Isaiah realized that he was sinful before God, with no hope of measuring up to God's standard of holiness. When Isaiah's lips were touched with a live burning coal, however, he was told that his sins were forgiven.

It wasn't the coal that cleansed him, but God. In response, Isaiah submitted himself entirely to God's service.

No matter how difficult his task would be, he said, "Here I am. Send me." The painful cleansing process was necessary before Isaiah could fulfill the task to which God was calling him. Before we accept God's call to speak for him to those around us, we must be cleansed as Isaiah was, confessing our sins and submitting to God's control.

Letting God purify us may be painful, but we must be purified so that we can truly represent God, who is pure and holy.

God appeared to Ezekiel

Ezekiel 1:26-28

Above the surface over their heads was what looked like a throne made of blue sapphire. And high above this throne was a figure whose appearance was like that of a man. [27] From his waist up, he looked like gleaming amber, flickering like a fire. And from his waist down, he looked like a burning flame, shining with splendor. [28] All around him was a glowing halo, like a rainbow shining through the clouds. This was the way the glory of the Lord appeared to me. When I saw it, I fell face down in the dust, and I heard someone's voice speaking to me.

Study notes:

This figure "whose appearance resembled a man" revealed God's holiness and prepared Ezekiel for what God was about to tell him. The figure represented God himself on the throne. In a similar way, Christ revealed God in human form and prepared us for his message of salvation. Christ came into history in a real, human body.

The glory of the Lord appeared like fire and a glowing halo or rainbow to Ezekiel. Ezekiel fell face down, overwhelmed by the contrast between God's holiness and his own sinfulness and insignificance. Eventually every person will fall before God, either out of reverence and awe for his mercy or out of fear of his judgment. Based on the way you are living today, how will you respond to God's holiness?

The four living beings and the four wheels are powerful pictures of judgment, yet the rainbow over the throne symbolizes God's never-ending faithfulness to his people. Just as God sent a rainbow to Noah to symbolize his promise never again to destroy the earth by a flood (Genesis 9:8-17), so this rainbow symbolizes God's promise to preserve those who remain faithful to him. The purpose of God's judgment is to correct us and, ultimately, to allow perfect peace and righteousness to reign on the earth forever.

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

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