

God Does What He Says

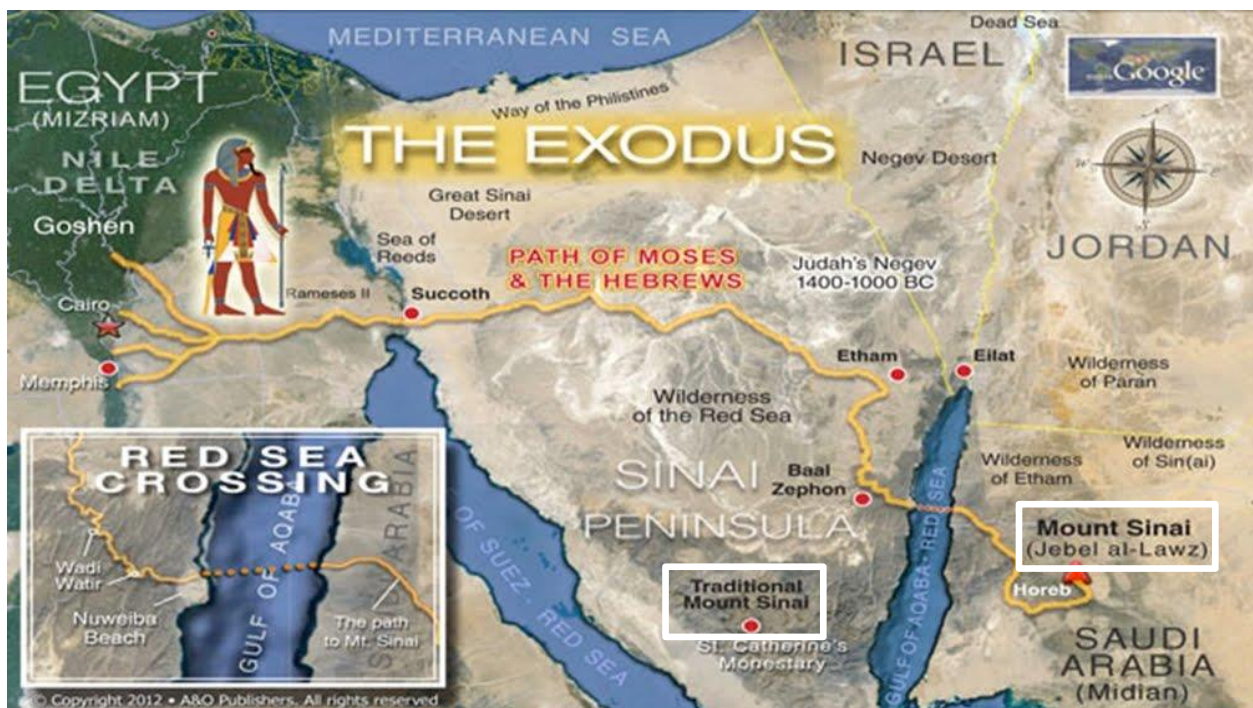
Pastor Cliff Bergman - Pinawa Alliance Church

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Exodus 15.22 to 32.35

One day when Moses was herding sheep in Midian he led his flock to *Horeb*, the *Mountain of God*. It was there, at a burning bush that didn't burn up, where Moses met God and the trajectory of his life was forever changed. God commissioned Moses to return to Egypt and lead God's people out of captivity. When Moses raised the question, "*Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?*" (Exo 3.11) God responded with, "*But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.*" (Exodus 3:12 ESV). God gave Moses two promises: first, He would be with Moses. He wasn't asking Moses to do this on his own, but He would be there alongside of Him and He would ensure the redemption of His people. The second promise was a sign to verify God had chosen Moses; God's people would serve God at the same mountain where Moses was commissioned by God. Throughout verse 12, "*you*" is singular except for the last, "*you shall serve*," where it is plural. Not only would Moses again serve God at this mountain, but God's people would accompany him. When they assembled at *Mount Horeb*, the *Mountain of God*, it would be clear God had sent Moses and that God does what He says.

God led His people from *Egypt* using a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. The route took was from *Rameses (Goshen)* to *Succoth* to *Etham* (Exo 12.37; 13.20). Though it is not certain, it is likely *Etham* was located west of modern day *Eilat*. At *Etham* instead of continuing across the top of the *Gulf of Aqaba* and eliminating the *Red Sea*



crossing, God directed them to change direction. It is likely they traveled south along the *Wadi Watir* to *Nuweiba* on the west shore of the *Gulf of Aqaba (Red Sea)*. God timed the journey so that shortly after His people arrived at *Nuweiba*, pharaoh and his army did as well and hemmed the Hebrews in with no escape. God intentionally led His people to this humanly insurmountable dilemma so as to manifest His glory as He dealt a final blow to Egypt and their gods and to build the faith of the Hebrews and successive generations. The dramatic *Red Sea* crossing was a 14 km journey on an underwater land bridge from *Nuweiba* between walls of water, supernaturally held in place by God, to the shore on the other side in *Arabia* (modern day *Saudi Arabia*). A pillar used to mark the landing spot; today it is “marked by a metal flag and plate at the place where the column was erected.”¹

The Journey to the Mountain of God

It is there where we pick up Israel’s journey. They travelled from the shore of the *Red Sea* into the wilderness where the next challenge they faced was a lack of drinkable water.

Exodus 15:22–25a (ESV) 22 Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. 23 When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore, it was named Marah. 24 And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” 25 And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

From *Marah* they travelled to *Elim* where there must have been an oasis since they camped near the water (Exo 15.27). We are given a date stamp for their next stop, partway between *Elim* and their destination of *Sinai*. They arrived at the wilderness of *Sin* on the 15th day of the 2nd month, or 1 month since they left Egypt (16.2). Again the Hebrews grumbled, this time over their hunger. The Lord responded by sending quail into the camp that evening to provide them with meat (16.8, 12-13). The following morning the 40-year daily provision of manna began. Each morning manna would appear like dew on the ground and they would gather as much as they needed for the day, however, on the 6th day they would gather twice as much so they would not need to gather any on the Sabbath, the 7th day. Read **Exodus 16** for the complete account. There are a number of lessons that can be gleaned from God’s provision of manna. One of them is the importance of the Sabbath as a day of rest (16.30); it was to be a day set apart for rest and focus on God.

The Mountain of God

The *Mountain of God* is also called *Mt. Horeb* and *Mt. Sinai*. Most of the maps at the backs of Bibles identify the *Mountain of God* as the mountain, *Jebel Musa*, near the

¹ Dr. Lennart Möller, *The Exodus Case*, LionScorp Media Productions, Inc. 2002, P. 206

southern tip of the *Sinai Peninsula*. Others, including me, believe Mt. Sinai is in *Saudi Arabia*. See the map above for the two possible locations.

Much has been written in support of both locations. It is relatively easy to examine the basic arguments on-line. Very briefly, the traditional site in the Sinai Peninsula was entrenched in the 4th century when *Constantine the Great* was emperor of Rome. However, there is a lack of support to affirm it is the actual location.

Fundamental to locating *Mt. Sinai* is of course the location of the Red Sea crossing. If Israel crossed the *Gulf of Aqaba*, then it follows *Mt. Sinai* is in *Saudi Arabia*. Further, Galatians 4:25 at the very least implies *Mount Sinai* is in *Arabia (Saudi Arabia)*. While there is no evidence Israel was ever at the traditional location, there is evidence found in *Saudi Arabia*. I mention some of it in the following.

Water From the Rock

The Hebrews continued their journey to the *Mountain of God*. The next stop for Israel after they left the wilderness of *Sin* was *Rephidim*. When they arrived there they quickly discovered once again there was no water. Given God's previous provision of water and His miraculous supply of manna each day one would have thought they would have realized God would provide – they just needed to trust Him. But they didn't; instead they grumbled to Moses.

Exodus 17:1–3 (ESV) 17 All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" 3 But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

The manner in which God responded to their need left no doubt it was a miracle.

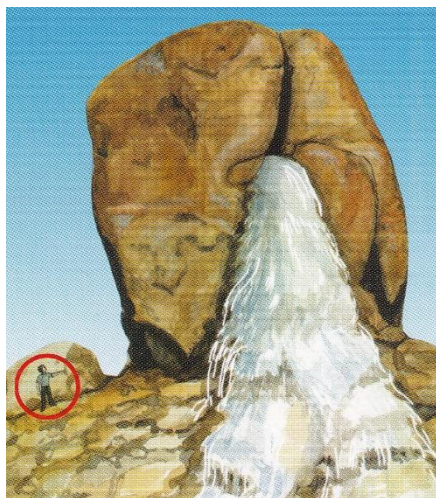
Exodus 17:4–7 (ESV) 4 So Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." 5 And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

Verse 6 suggests it was a specific rock, rather than the mountain side or a pile of rocks. Moses did as the Lord told him and water came gushing out of the rock and provided them with an abundance of water that likely continued until they left the region approximately 1 year later (Num 10.11-12), and perhaps continued afterwards. Perhaps the rock shown below was that rock.

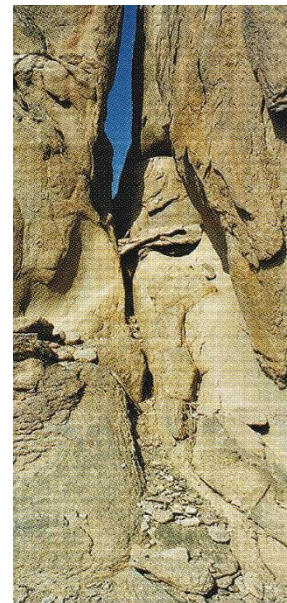


Split Rock at Mt. Horeb

<https://www.foxnews.com/world/saudi-arabia-christian-tour>



Depiction of water from rock.
Notice the size relative to a
person (encircled in red).
The Exodus Case, p. 246



Water erosion at
base of crack
The Exodus Case
p. 246

God's Promise is Fulfilled

It is only a short distance from the rock of *Horeb* to the *Mountain of God* where God had commissioned Moses. As the people gathered at the base of the mountain, they became the evidence that God had called Moses – **God had done what He said He would**. That which the Hebrews could never have done on their own; that which was humanly impossible, **God had done!** The fulfillment of that promise ushered in another promise to His people.

Exodus 19:2–6 (ESV) 2 They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, 3 while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: 4 ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; 6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

Standing in the Presence of God

When Moses first stood before God at this Mountain, God cautioned Moses to not draw near and told him to take off his sandals for the place where he was standing was holy ground (Exo 3.3-6). So overwhelming was the presence of God that “Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God” (3.6). And now all of Israel, having witnessed the unmistakable hand of God as He redeemed them, stood along with Moses at the foot of the *Mountain of God*. Meeting God was not a trite or casual exercise; it was anything but! In preparation they were to consecrate themselves and wash their clothes and on the third day the Lord would descend on *Mt. Sinai* in their sight (19.10-11). Surely it is occasions like this where people in the past prepared to stand in the awesome presence of God that prompted people for generations since to prepare their hearts and put on their “*Sunday best*” when they gathered for corporate worship. The awesome presence of God is reinforced, for just as previously Moses could not come near, now the people needed to keep their distance and not so much as touch the mountain or they would die (19.12-14).

Exodus 19:16–20 (ESV) 16 On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. 17 Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. 19 And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. 20 The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

The presence of God was accompanied by thunders and lightnings, a thick cloud, and very loud trumpet blasts (19.16). “Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly.” (Exodus 19:18 ESV). “Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.” (Exodus 24:17 ESV). One of the uniquenesses of the mountain identified as *Mt. Sinai* in the *Jebel al-Lawz* mountain range and adds credibility to that conclusion is its black top. It stands out from the surrounding mountains and looks like it had been burned with fire, though some contest that is the reason for the blackened top. One thing is certain though, the people of God stood in His presence.



<https://jabalmaqla.com/blackened-peak/>

Receiving the Word of God

In the subsequent days God gave His Word to His people. Central were the **Ten Commandments** detailed in **Exodus 20.1 – 17**. The key ingredients of living a God-honoring life are embodied in the 10 Commandments. The first 3 focus on the absolute priority God is to have in our lives. The 4th Commandment highlights not just the critical importance of regular rest from our labors, but also intentional and consistent focus on God. The last 6 deal with relationships with one another. The following chapters of Exodus lay out many other aspects of the Mosaic Law and the details for the construction of the Tabernacle which would be central in their worship until the temple was constructed by Solomon nearly 500 years later. Some claim that because we are no longer under the Law that it is not relevant to us. Certainly, Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial or sacrificial demands of the Law when He died on the cross at Calvary. It is also helpful to remind ourselves that the purpose of the Law was to make people aware they are sinners, “Now we know that whatever the law says it

speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3:19–20 ESV). The law was never able to save anyone; it could only condemn. That doesn’t mean, however, the Law is irrelevant to a Christian. Embedded throughout the Law is an unfolding of who God is and how we might live in a manner that pleases Him.

Matt Smethurst, managing editor of *The Gospel Coalition*, provides a very helpful illustration of the role of the Law for us,

“Imagine you had some dirt on your face but didn’t know it. “Go look in the mirror,” a friend says. Now, is the mirror’s job to clean your face? Of course not. It’s to expose your face and send you to the shower. Likewise, the law is a mirror that reveals sin. Its purpose isn’t to clean us, but to send us to the only One who can. The mirror of the law was designed to drive us to the shower of the gospel (Rom. 3:20; 5:20; Gal. 3:23).” ²

The Law unfolds for us God’s desires for how His children should live.

A Concluding Overview

I have three objectives, or goals for you and me in these messages from Exodus. My prayer is that God will use these messages that we may make progress in each of these areas in our relationship to Him and our walk with Him.

1. Elevate Our View of God

Over the course of the past several decades our society has become more and more casual. In much of the workplace where suits and ties used to be the norm, they are no more. Our society has not only become more casual in how people dress, but in relationships as well. When I was a child, I can’t image addressing someone the age of my parents by their first name, yet today it is common for children to address people who are their grandparent’s age by their first name.

The casual trend has influenced the Church as well. There too, not just what we wear has become far more casual, but also some of our practices. A by-product of the casual trend is how some view and regard God. At times the relationship appears trite and seems rather superficial. God is perceived as little more than a friend or someone to hang out with. The concept of reverence and a holy fear of God is overlooked. On the one hand, we are encouraged to approach God with boldness and confidence, and we can do so because of our relationship to Jesus Christ. “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16 ESV).

² Matt Smethurst, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-dont-christians-keep-jewish-law/>

However, we sometimes need a bit more of the attitude Isaiah displayed when he said, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (Isaiah 6:5 ESV). As we reflect on the experience of God’s people as they gathered at Mt. Sinai, may we be captured by the presence of God. Consecrating themselves and washing their garments before God descended upon Mt. Sinai didn’t in and of itself change their hearts, but in a very tangible way it impressed upon them the importance of a surrendered heart when they stood before the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Perhaps what we wear and how we conduct ourselves remains a relevant point. We need an elevated appreciation for the holiness of God and His infinite nature in contrast to our finiteness. He is the Creator and we are but the work of His hands.

Further, how we relate to God, our worship of Him and our dependance on Him is directly linked to our perception of Him. Our view of God shapes our responses to our circumstances, including COVID-19 and its disruption to our lives. We just want this to be over! To get on with our lives! While COVID and its far-reaching implications have been a surprise to us, none of it is a surprise to God. I don’t want to dismiss the legitimate hardship some have faced as a result of COVID-19, but God surely wants us to benefit from this disruption. Undoubtedly, He wants us to grow in our relationship with Him. He wants people everywhere to turn to Him, recognizing He is sovereign and wants people to turn to Him in this crisis. His desire is that His Church will emerge more *Christ-like* and committed to Him.

The majesty and magnificence of God radiates through each step of His people along the exodus from Egypt and erupts at *Mt. Sinai*. God purposefully ordered the steps of His children to display His glory so we wouldn’t miss out on **Who He is** and the resources He extends to each of His children today. Remember, He intentionally directed the children of Israel so that they were hemmed in by 14 km of water on 1 side, pharaoh and his army on the other, and mountains on the either flank preventing their escape. Why did He do that? To elevate their view of God and ours too!

2. Elevate Our Regard for God’s Word

The reason why I spend time on many of the details of the Bible’s account of the historical events is so you can see the Bible is credible and trustworthy. Sadly, there is a growing trend by some professing Christians to dismiss what the Bible has to say about science or history, claiming that all the Bible intends to address are “*spiritual*” topics. The fact is though, for God there is no such differentiation; all the universe is His domain, and He upholds it by the power of His word. To Him science, history, and spiritual are all intertwined.

From Exodus 16.1 to 34.35, God referenced the historical event of, “*Israel coming out of Egypt*,” 9 times. In introducing the 10 Commandments, He identified Himself this way, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of

Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” (Exo 20.2). God rooted all of this in history; it not only happened, but it happened the way He described it.

Did you notice, too, God’s affirmation of 6-day creation? When the Lord gave the 4th Commandment to set aside 1 day as a *Sabbath*, or *holy day*, for rest from one’s labor and to focus on the Lord, He drew upon His pattern when He created the universe. “For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” (Exodus 20:11 ESV). Cf. 31.17. One thing is clear, God believed He created the universe in 6 literal days!!

In addition to the unmistakable evidence of His presence in His creation, God has left evidence throughout history that validates the trustworthiness and reliability of His Word. He has done so to elevate our regard for His Word. Just as surely as God did what He told Moses He would do, namely gather the people at the *Mountain of God*, God will fulfill every promise He has made to His people, including to you and me. God didn’t promise us He would spare us from the hardship of COVID-19 or other adversity that He allows to come our way, but He has promised to care for us throughout (1 Peter 5.7).

The most important promise is the one He gives to everyone who places his or her faith and trust in Jesus Christ for their salvation, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” (John 11.25-26). While a believer will die physically, he or she will live eternally with God.

3. Elevate Our Walk with the Lord

As we saturate ourselves with His Word and our view of God is elevated, it can’t help but elevate our walk with Him as well. Instead of being overwhelmed with disappointment and adversity, we will more clearly see the outline of God’s hand reaching down to care for us and to give us victory even in the most disappointing of circumstances. With our eyes seeing beyond the trials of today to the triumphs of tomorrow, we will persevere with supernatural conviction knowing God will draw near to us. When we consider the holiness of God, we can’t help but “lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb 12.1-2).

May you experience the elevating work of God in your heart today! Don’t miss the powerful rendition of “***Behold Our God***,” written by Bob Kauflin of Sovereign Grace and performed by the CBU University Choir and Orchestra. Be sure to turn the volume up at least a little bit.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UV8bv4QuDtM&ab_channel=MichaelLiningMusic

Lyrics: <https://pinawaalliance.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/behold-our-god.pdf>