

Exodus 33:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way.

Analysis

For I will not go up in the midst of thee—The devastating announcement: God will fulfill His promise but withdraw His immediate presence. The reason is Israel's stubborn rebellion (עַם קָשֶׁה עֹרֵף, *am qesheh oref*, 'stiff-necked people'). The danger is real: 'lest I consume thee in the way'—God's holiness would destroy unholy people. This reveals the paradox of divine presence: Israel's greatest privilege (God dwelling among them) has become their greatest peril due to sin.

Historical Context

The term 'stiff-necked' comes from agricultural imagery of oxen that refuse the yoke. Leviticus 10:1-2 demonstrates the reality of being consumed by God's holiness when Nadab and Abihu died for unauthorized fire.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does understanding God's holiness deepen your appreciation for Christ's mediation?
2. What 'stiff-necked' areas in your life resist God's direction and endanger your fellowship with Him?

Interlinear Text

אֶל H413	אֶרֶץ H776	זֹבֶת H2100	חֵלָב H2461	וְדָבָשׁ H1706	כִּי H3588	לֹא H3808	אֲנִי לֹא אֵלָּה H5927
	Unto a land	flowing	with milk	and honey			for I will not go up
בְּקִרְבָּם H7130	כִּי H3588	עַם H5971	קִשָּׁה H7186	אֲתָה עֲרֹף H6203			
in the midst		people	of thee for thou art a stiffnecked				
פֶּן H6435	אֲכַלֶּב H3615	בְּדַרְכֵּךְ H1870					
	lest I consume	thee in the way					

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 3:8 (Parallel theme): And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Acts 7:51 (Parallel theme): Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

Jeremiah 11:5 (Parallel theme): That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O LORD.

Joshua 5:6 (Parallel theme): For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD sware that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

Numbers 16:45 (Parallel theme): Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.

Numbers 16:21 (Parallel theme): Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.