Standing on Holy Ground

Introduction. There are two occasions in the Old Testament which form the basis of what we'll talk about this morning.

The first is when Moses was in exile from Egypt after killing an Egyptian overlord in defense of a Hebrew. He lived in Midian with the people of Jethro. While herding his sheep, he saw a bush that burned with fire, but wasn't consumed by it. Soon, as he investigated the wonder, he heard the voice of God. God told Moses to take the shoes off of his feet, because the ground on which he stood was holy ground (Exodus 3:1-6).

The second was when Joshua prepared to enter battle, after crossing the Jordan River (Joshua 5:13-15). Joshua then saw a man with a drawn sword in his hand. He asked the man where he stood regarding Israel and the impending battle to defeat Jericho. He said he was the Commander of the army of the Lord, and he told Joshua, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy" (v. 15).

Today, our purpose is to teach about the circumstances of Moses and Joshua standing on holy ground, and then we'll follow it up with four applications where you'll constantly be on holy ground as a Christian.

I. The Circumstances of Holy Ground

A. How can ground be either holy or unholy?
   1. "Holy ground" didn't depend on the condition of the soil; it was that God was present. Moses and Joshua were in the presence of God.
   2. Hebrews 9:1-14 describes the solemn occasion of the Day of Atonement and the priest's encounter with God. In its original context, Leviticus 16:1-34 provides very strict instructions about how the priests were to prepare and present themselves before the Lord in the Most Holy Place.

B. What taking off one's shoes signified.
   1. When they removed their shoes, they showed their respect for God and His authority. They demonstrated their readiness to receive instruction and their unquestioning obedience to do what was commanded.
   2. There were other places in the Bible where individuals stood before God in reverence.
      a) Jacob stood on holy ground at Bethel after he observed the ladder ascending into heaven. He commented on the sacredness of the place (Genesis 28:16-17).
      b) Isaiah stood on holy ground when he looked into heaven and witnessed the awesome presence of God. He was moved to action (Isaiah 6:1-8).
      c) The Roman centurion who witnessed the death of Jesus was on holy ground, but he seemed the only bystander to recognize it when he said, "Truly this man was the son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

II. Times When We're on Holy Ground

A. The "holy ground" of Moses and Joshua was physical ground in the regions of Mt. Sinai and the Jordan River. If we had more biblical information, someone could feasibly find these two spots on Earth today.

B. However, we're going to use "holy ground" metaphorically in the rest of our lesson to represent what we do in the presence of God. I want to guide you through four times when we stand on "holy ground" as Christians.
   1. When we worship.
      a) The psalmists were dedicated to explaining the benefit and feeling toward worship (Psalm 84:10; 95:1-3, 6; 100:1-5). You're in a building, but you're really in the presence of God.
      b) When Christ taught in His public ministry, He found people interested in worship (John 4:19-20, 24). Early Christians knew the importance of worship (Acts 2:42; Philippians 3:3). They were also commanded to not forsake assembling (Hebrews 10:23-25). Worship is a part of the command to "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28).
   2. When we read our Bibles.
      a) The Bible represents God's inspired communication to mankind, written by the people who've been inspired by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-13; Ephesians 3:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
      b) The people of Nehemiah's day enjoyed the reading of the Word and wanted to do God's will (Nehemiah 8:4-6). The Word builds faith (Romans 10:14; Galatians 3:2).
      c) The Bible wasn't revealed to be changed at a whim. God gave us the job to protect it (Jude 3; Revelation 22:18-19). And He wants us to do it (Luke 11:28; James 1:22).
   3. When we pray.
      a) When we pray, we approach God's "throne of grace," so it's "holy ground" (Hebrews 4:15-16). You're welcomed by God and invited to ask for mercy, strength, and endurance.
      b) We're to pray in God's will (1 John 5:14), and not cease from it (Luke 18:1, 8; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).
      c) Prayer is the path to peace and wisdom (Philippians 4:6-7; James 1:5-8). It can change your brain from a state of anxiety to tranquility.
   4. When we evangelize.
      a) Jesus and Paul showed us how to evangelize when He offered people eternal life (John 4:13-14; Acts 17:1-4, 16-34).
      b) The church is the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15), so we should follow the command of Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15). We have strong examples of nameless Christians who took this charge seriously (Acts 8:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:8).

Conclusion. Standing on "holy ground" isn't merely about where our feet are planted — it's about whether our hearts are surrendered. We can stand in an auditorium and still resist God's voice. We can sing the songs, speak the language of Scripture, and yet refuse what God's calling us to do. "Holy ground" invites more than our attention; it calls for our obedience.

As we end, may our prayer be, “Lord, let me do Your will.” And let our answer be: “Here’s my life — lead me. Here’s my heart — shape it. Here are my hands — use them.” What good is it to stand on “holy ground” if we won’t walk in holy obedience?

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