

Moses and the Glory of Yahweh at Mount Sinai

Exodus 33:12-23; 34:29-35

Bible Memory Verse

Leviticus 19:2 NIV

Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.

Bible Story

Moses had spent considerable time with the Lord up on the mountain—a couple of 40 days worth. God told Moses all of the laws and decrees that the nation of Israel were supposed to live by in order to be a holy and separate nation. During that time, the Lord also gave Moses a detailed description of the tabernacle, the house of God, the place where the Lord was to dwell among the people. The construction of the moveable tent itself, the pieces within, and the way the high priest and the Levitical priests were to handle the matters of sacrifices and ceremonies, were all a picture of the heavenly sanctuary wherein God dwells (cf. Hebrews 9:11, 24). The glory of the Lord was to rest among the Bema seat on the top of the Ark of the Covenant within the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle. The Lord God was to literally dwell among the people of Israel. What an amazing privilege to be near the Lord of heaven and earth!

Now during Moses time with the Lord, he became so near to Him. Moses boldly asked the Lord to show him His glory. The Lord said, *“There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen”* (Exodus 33:21-23). The glory of the Lord is so powerful and holy that it causes us mere mortals to keel over and die: *“you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live”* (Exodus 33:20). So the Lord showed Moses His glory. When Moses returned to the

people from the mountain, his face reflected God's glory (Exodus 34:29). And the people were afraid to come near him (Exodus 34:30).

"When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever he entered the Lord's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the Lord" (Exodus 34:33-35).

At the end of the book of Exodus, the glory of the Lord actually fills the tabernacle—the fulfillment and visual existence of the Lord among His covenanted people. *"So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels"* (Exodus 40:38). This glory stayed with the Israelites all their time in the land. When Solomon built the glorious temple in the city of Jerusalem, in like fashion, the glory of the Lord filled the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). However, during the apostasy of the Israelites when they rejected the Lord and followed after other gods, the Lord God sent them into exile by the hand of the Assyrians and the Babylonians. The prophecy of Ezekiel records the departure of the glory of the Lord from the temple: *"The cloud filled the temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the Lord ... then the glory of the Lord departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim"* (Ezekiel 10:4, 18). This was a very depressing event for the people of Israel, but they did not seem to care, for their wickedness was great. They had walked so far from the Lord their God that they did not even know it when the glory had departed from their midst.

The amazing thing though is that further in the prophecy of Ezekiel, the author describes a heavenly temple that is rebuilt and restored. In this description, the glory of the Lord returns to the temple: *"the glory of the Lord entered the temple through the gate facing east. Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple"* (Ezekiel 43:4-5). There are many interpretations of what this temple means according to the timeline of church history, but we really do not know. What we do know, however, is that when Jesus Christ came, he brought the glory of the Lord with him because he represented it. The gospel of John tells us: *"the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14 emphasis mine). The words "made his dwelling among us" can be read "tabernacled among us." He now lives among us and with us as he did during the time of the people of Israel. Maybe the renewed, rebuilt temple is us...the church...the body of Christ. And His glory has indwelt within us because of Jesus Christ. I do not know if this explanation is accurate regarding the temple in Ezekiel, but I do know that the Lord Jesus Christ through the Spirit dwells in all those who call Him their Lord and Savior.

Life Application

One of the amazing things in this section of Scripture is that Moses reflected the glory of God. What an incredible picture of what we are supposed to do: reflect God in our lives!!

- Jesus said in the gospels that we are to shine our light on a hill for all to see, not hide it under a bowl.
- Another picture is that our churches are to be lampstands; a place where lights and lamps can stand and be displayed.

We need to be beacons of light in our world. Our friends and family so desperately need to see the light. And who is the light? Jesus Christ. He is the light that has come into the world. The glory that is displayed in and through our lives.

So what does that mean? It means that our actions are really important. How we act toward each other becomes a way for us to display the glory of God to our world. Just think: you hold and reflect the glory of God in your life. You have incredible power.

What are you going to do with it?

Review Questions

1. What did Moses ask of the LORD God? If he could see the Lord's glory
2. What did the LORD God do in order for Moses to "see" His glory? The LORD put Moses in a cleft of a rock and covered him with his hand
3. What did Moses actually see? The LORD's back
4. If a human being sees the face of God, what happens to him? He dies
5. What would Moses wear over his face when he went back to the camp after meeting with God? A veil

Coloring Sheet

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