

Show Me Your Glory

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn once again to that chapter, Exodus chapter 33, and verse 21.

And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock. And while my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.

Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen. The book of Exodus is famous not just within the Christian church.

It is famous within the Jewish people, amongst Jewish people, and indeed beyond. It's famous for baby Moses and the bulrushes.

It's famous for the burning bush, and the ten plagues, and the Passover, and the Exodus itself, where the sea, the Red Sea parted, the Ten Commandments, and the journey through the wilderness.

[1 : 18] There are few people who have any kind of general knowledge that haven't heard at least one of these stories. And if you're a Bible student, then it's famous for the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, which is God's way of providing salvation through the death of a lamb.

That was, of course, the Passover lamb in Exodus chapter 12. It's also famous for the renewal of the covenant in chapter 24, then the law, both moral and ceremonial.

And, of course, you have the intriguing significance of the high priest and his clothing, his robes, and the tabernacle itself with all its component parts.

All of these events and items make the book fascinating to read. If you've never read the book of Exodus before, then read it, because it is a fascinating book.

But if I was to describe the book of Exodus tonight in one word, it would have to be the word glory. And if I was allowed to extend that description, it would have to be the glory of God.

[2 : 35] The book begins with God revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush. And that revelation was none other than the glory of God.

Take your shoes off your feet, said God to Moses, because the place where you are standing is holy ground. And God and Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

That was something of the glory of God. And the book of Exodus closes in chapter 40 and verse 34 with God's glory filling the tabernacle, which now had been built and put together.

Now was at the center of the camp of Israel. And when it was all put together, we read in those closing verses that the glory of God filled the most holy place.

So the very thing that had been revealed to Moses in remoteness, in the burning bush, in all its simplicity, was the same glory of God that was revealed to Israel and that dwelt amongst the people of Israel and became their guide and their focus of worship.

[3 : 43] So if I was allowed to give the title an even longer description, it would have to be the glory of God revealed to men and women. So it shouldn't surprise us when we come to a chapter like this in chapter 33, that Moses should ask God to show him his glory.

That's the theme that runs all the way through the book. In fact, it's the theme that runs all the way through this chapter as well that we're concentrating on tonight.

In this chapter, you have three senses of the glory of God. First of all, you have the glory of God, verse 7 to verse 11, where Moses built another tent.

Not the main tent, which was used for the high priest, but another remote tent where he could meet with God. And we read that having built that tent, he would regularly go out to that place and personally meet with God.

This was his place of prayer where he actually made contact. Personally, he came close to God. And so here we have the glory of God meeting with Moses face to face.

[5 : 02] And then there's another sense in this chapter in which the glory of God is present, but not this time meeting Moses, but guiding the people of Israel. You remember right from the very beginning, from the Exodus itself, that God chose to guide his people by a very special visible sign.

And that was the pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. There was this massive, great pillar that was in front of the Israelites that moved.

And they were to follow this. God's command to Israel was very simple. You just simply follow the pillar. Nobody could misunderstand it. It was perfectly clear.

And the pillar, which was a cloud by name, changed into a pillar of fire by night. That too was the glory of God because God was in the pillar.

It wasn't just an inanimate force or a light. God was in that pillar. So in this chapter also, God is talking about his guidance of Israel through the wilderness.

[6 : 06] And that again, it refers to him personally in his glory, guiding the people, leading the people from one place to another. That's the second way. But then the third way in which the glory of God appears in this chapter is where God answers Moses' prayer specifically, which was this, Lord, show me your glory.

So the third sense in which the glory of God appears in this chapter is in answer to Moses' prayer. And it's God's revealing himself in his glory.

And that's exactly what happened. Moses asked a very simple question. He made a very simple request to God, Lord, show me your glory. And God answered that question.

I want to ask several questions this evening. I want to ask, first of all, why was it that Moses asked the Lord this particular request? Please, verse 18, show me your glory.

What is the glory of God? The glory of God is what we would see if we were to go into heaven today. If I can put it like that.

[7 : 22] God is invisible to us. He has never shown himself to me. And I doubt very much if he has shown himself to anyone here. That is because he is, in essence, invisible.

As far as we are concerned, he is invisible. But if it was possible to see God in all his majesty, if we were transported tonight into heaven and we were to see, we were talking about this on Wednesday night at the prayer meeting, the one who sits on the throne, who was only described in terms of the most precious minerals and stones here in this world.

And that's because his appearance was simply indescribable. And that's what you would expect, isn't it? This is God. God who is eternal, invisible in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

Eternal without beginning and without end. Inscrutable. Inscrutable. We cannot understand. We cannot even begin to understand who God is this evening.

If we were to see him, then that's what we would see. We would see something which was so glorious, it would take our breath away.

[8 : 42] It would be the most awesome sight we have ever in our life seen. So awesome. So intense. So utterly magnificent and overpowering that literally we would die if we saw it here on earth.

That's what God means when he says, no one can see. You cannot see my face. Verse 20. For man shall not see me and live. And that's because in our sinfulness, there was a time, of course, when God made the earth in the very first instance.

And when everything was imperfect, when everything was perfect. When God and man had a perfect relationship with one another. And God would walk in the garden when he created Adam and Eve in their perfection.

And there was perfect harmony between God and his creation. Then there was no danger. But now in the sinful world, because you and I are fallen beings.

The Bible tells us that there is such a breach between us and God that we cannot see him and live. Because of what the Bible describes as this.

[9 : 55] That God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. And so what we would see is so overpowering that we simply would die in the process.

It would give us apoplexy. It would give us... Our hearts would stop in the presence of the almighty God. Of course, that is a reminder to us of how our worship should be.

Because whilst we cannot see him tonight, God promises that he is meeting with us tonight. And that truth alone should be a huge incentive to us to come in that door trembling.

There ought to be a sense where we tremble every time we approach God. Whether collectively or whether we come to him individually.

I'm not talking about the kind of fear which drives us away. I'm talking about the kind of fear which is healthy. The blend of fear and joy. Which actually goes together to make worship what it is.

[11:10] We rejoice in God coming to him and singing his praises because we love him. And because we love to be close to him. And to express his worship.

But there's also... There should be a fear. There should be a trembling. There should be a sense of what we do. No one can see my face and live.

So that's the glory of God. But why did Moses ask that God would show him his glory?

Well, in order to find that out, you have to go all the way back into the chapter. And you have to survey the circumstances behind this very special request.

The children of Israel were the most unique people on the face of the earth.

[12:10] God had called them to be his treasured possession. And they had seen sights that no one else had ever seen in the history of mankind.

They had seen God's power working in the Egyptians. Answering their prayer. God had brought judgment on the Egyptians. He sent the plagues. The plague of blood. The plague of frogs. The plague of darkness.

The plague of boils. They had seen some of the most awesome sights that anyone had ever seen. And then they were amongst the people who God had delivered from Egypt by parting the Red Sea.

They literally... Imagine you were amongst those people witnessing the Red Sea itself literally dividing into two. Creating the dry land on which you could walk to safety upon.

He had led them through the Red Sea into the desert. And he had then brought them to Mount Sinai where he spoke to them. And he spoke to them in such an overpowering manner that they were so frightened of his voice.

[13:15] They said, we can't take any more. They had met with God. They had seen his fire, his light, his thunderings and his lightnings. And they had shaken to their very...

The core of their being. What a privilege that must have been. No one else had seen this. But it wasn't just that. They had heard his voice speaking to them tenderly and reassuring them that they were his people.

His treasured possession. That he was going to fight their enemies for them. That they need not fear. That he was their God and they were his people. And they were the most unique.

They were the most unique people in all the world. And after all of that. After them promising to obey God.

Forty days later. While Moses was up the mountain. They decided to create another God for themselves. Not the living and true God. But one which was made out of gold.

[14:17] They took off their jewelry. And they threw it in to the common pot. And Aaron stupidly and foolishly. He listened to them.

And he created a golden calf. And when they saw the golden calf. Aaron said these are the gods. These are the gods of Israel who have brought you up out of Egypt. And they rose up. And they worshipped the golden calf.

And Moses. For Moses. When he discovered what was going on. It was the darkest. Bleakest. Most despairing moment.

In all his life. He had never seen anything like it. After all the privileges. Which the children of Israel enjoyed.

They were God's people. They were in no doubt. As to who the living and true God was. They had seen sign after sign. Evidence after evidence. And even at that.

[15:18] They did exactly. What God forbid them to do. God had given them the ten commandments. You shall not have any other gods before me. You shall not make to yourself a graven image of anything.

That is in the heaven above. Or the earth beneath. Or the water under the heaven. And the very thing. The first thing. That God had told them. Not to do. That was what they were now doing.

Forty days. After promising to the Lord. They gave him their word. All that you have commanded to us. We will do. Forty days later. They're doing exactly the opposite.

And Moses. There were three reactions. Moses when he came down the mountain. His first reaction was utter rage. He lost his temper.

He threw the stone tablets. The tablets on which by the hand of God. The ten commandments were written. He threw them down to the ground. And they smashed at his feet. And then he went.

[16:16] And he. And the next reaction was retribution. He ground the golden calf. And he made them drink. The solution that was. Whatever solution it was. Between the gold and the water.

And then there was punishment. The punishment of God. That God brought on them. At the end of the chapter. God sends a plague. Because of what they had done. But then the third reaction.

Is. Retirement. I don't mean that he. Abandoned his work. I don't mean that he came to the conclusion. He was so old. He couldn't do anything more. But that he retired.

Into the privacy. Of the presence. Of God. And that's what he did. At the very. Worst. Most bleak. Despairing moment. Of his life.

And it was there. That he discovered. Something of God. That he had never. Discovered before. He ran. He took refuge. He hid. In God.

[17:19] There are times. In the Christian life. Where it takes. Near despair. For us to be brought.

The nearest. To God. Times. Times. Of. Massive. Disappointment.

Where we cannot. Figure out. What is happening. Around us. Where it doesn't. Make sense. If ever. Something. Didn't make sense. To Moses. It was.

God's people. Turning. Against him. Deliberately. This wasn't. A sinful activity. Which they just. Fell into. By mistake. This was something. That they deliberately. Planned.

And executed. And something. That Aaron. Even Moses. Brother himself. He discovered. That he couldn't. Trust him. To do.

[18:16] What God. Had established. Him to do. As the high priest. Nothing. Made sense. If ever. A moment. Came. In the mind. Of Moses.

Where he must have thought. It just. Doesn't work. It's not. Working. God's people. They say. That they're listening.

To God. But yet. A moment. Later. And they're doing. The very opposite. What a disappointment. A massive. Disappointment. It must have been.

For him. And what confusion. There must have been. Going through. His mind. And through his heart. And as far as the future. Was concerned. Well. If God was to.

Mark this. If he was to give us. According to what we. Deserve. Right now. Then we are finished. We are destroyed. And if ever. God had a reason.

[19:09] To destroy his people. It's right now. Where they have just. Flown in his face. They've shaken their fist. At God. And they've said. We don't want you. We would rather have. A golden calf. That cannot do anything.

That we've made. With our own hands. We would rather have that. To rule over us. Now that's the logic. Of unbelief. Isn't it? When we say.

I would rather have something. Why was it. That they built the golden calf. Why in the world. Would anyone. Who has experienced. The power. And the awesomeness. Of God. Choose.

By their own volition. To actually. An alternative. To God. And I'll tell you why. Because it's always. Easier. To worship. Something. That we have control. Over. Or we think. We have control. Over. And something. That gives us. An excuse. To live.

[20:05] As we. Want to live. You see. God. Only wants. What is best. For us. And his. Ten commandments. Are full. Of instruction. As to.

How to live. The very. Best. Possible. Life. He is the. Manufacturer. He knows. What is good. For us. And it was. In love. That he gave.

It. We wasn't. Wanting to. Unduly. Restrict. The people. Of God. In actual. Fact. The ten commandments. Gave freedom. And liberty. To Israel. If they keep them. Then that's.

The freest. And the most. Liberated. Life. That they. That they have. But. When you. When there's a voice. Inside you. Like we were saying. This morning. That is telling you.

All the time. To break. To do your own thing. To break. With God's. Restrictions. Then you turn away. With God. And you find a God. That let you do. What you want to do. Have you done that. This evening.

[20:58] Have you found. A God. Found someone. To worship. Or something. To worship. That will allow you. Have you convinced. Yourself. About a way of life.

That will. That will allow you. To do what you. Want to do. Rather than listen. To God. Well let me remind you. Of this. It isn't real.

And I want. I hope. Tonight. That if nothing else. That you're able. To see. The foolishness. Of do. Of living a life. That is other. Than the life. That God. Wants you to live. Because the life. That God. Has given to us. In Jesus Christ. Is the best possible. Life.

That we could ever have. Jesus said. I have come. To. Set you free. Free from the guilt.

[21 : 58] And from the restriction. Which sin puts upon us. Not which. Not which he puts upon us. But which. Our own sinfulness. Put upon us. And so Moses.

Asked this prayer. He made this prayer. In the middle of a. Of probably the darkest. Most difficult period. In his whole life. And there are times.

In our lives. As Christians. When we go through. Times of. Great adversity. Huge difficulty. And these are the very times.

That we draw near to God. In a way that we never. Perhaps have drawn near to him. In the past. And I wonder if. There is anyone tonight. And you're going through. That. That kind of difficulty. Obviously it's not going to be.

The same as Moses. Our lives are all so different. But sometimes. God allows. That. Difficulty. To creep into your life. Things that we don't understand.

[22 : 54] So that we will take refuge. As never before. In him. And having. Asked.

For God's mercy. For God's mercy. And for his help. And for his guidance. In the future. God just simply. Commit. Moses just simply. Committed himself. To God. As he had never done before. He turned his attention. Away from Israel. Because the more he looked at Israel. The more frustrated he got. If he keeps his eyes on Israel. If he focuses on Israel. He's only going to become disappointed. He's only going to become.

He's only going to become. He's only going to become. He's only going to become. But if he focuses. His eyes above. And if he. If he comes to God. Then he knows. That the Lord never changes. That he is secure.

And he wants to discover. That security. More than ever before. And so. That's. Why. Moses. Asked this question. Why. Lord.

[23 : 50] Show me. Your glory. I want us to ask. Secondly. And I know the time has gone. And to some extent. I've answered this question already. So I'm not going to spend. Any more time on it. What did Moses.

Not. See. Well he didn't see. The face. Of God. The. The unrestricted. Majesty. Of God. The unhidden. Majesty.

Of God. The only. Human beings. That are able to see. That face. Of God. Are those. Who are in heaven. Tonight. And the great. Promise.

That belongs to. Every one of us. Who trusts. In Jesus Christ. Is that. For all eternity. We will see. God. As he is. We will see Jesus. As he is. In his glory. And his majesty.

And again. As we were thinking about. On Wednesday night. That's a sight. That no one. Will ever get tired. Of. Jesus said. He was going to. Prepare. A place. So that. Where he was.

[24 : 44] There. They may be. Also. The Christian life. Extends. Beyond this world. Into a next world. Which is simply. Indescribable.

God. But it's a promise. It's a certainty. We have God's word. For that. If we trust. And follow. Jesus Christ. Moses did not see. The face of God. Because no one can see. The face of God. And live. What then did. Moses.

See. Well. He saw. What could. Let me. Let's read it once again. He said. Please show me your glory. Verse 19. God said. I will make all my goodness. Pass before you. And will proclaim before you.

My name. The Lord. And I will be gracious. To whom I will be gracious. And I will show mercy. On whom I will show mercy. But he said. You cannot see my face. For man shall not see me.

[25 : 37] And live. Verse 21. The Lord said. Behold. There is a place. By me. Where you shall stand. On the rock. And while my glory. Passes by. I will put you. In a cleft of the rock.

And I will cover you. With my hand. Until I have passed by. Then. I will take away my hand. And you can see my back. But my face. May not be seen. So you can see. It's very simple.

Isn't it? God's promising him. Come up here with me. And I'll put you. In a little cave. There's a little cave. A cleft of the rock. And I'm going to put my hand. Whatever that means. What does the hand of God mean?

God is without. Body. A body. But somehow or other. This is what. This is how he describes it. I'm going to put my hand. Over the mouth of the cave. And then I'm going to make myself. Pass by you. And while my face.

Might be visible to you. My hand's going to protect you. But then when I pass by. I'm going to take my hand away. So that you can see. My back. In one sense. There's something very crude about this.

[26 : 33] Isn't there? Something awkwardly crude about it. It's too simplistic. And that's why we believe. That God is using language. Just simply. So that we can understand. We don't know.

Exactly what. Is meant. I suppose the main question is. What is the back of God? How can God describe himself.

In terms of a front and a back? There is no front to God. There is no back. All is front. All is glory. What does God mean. When he talks about.

His front and his back. Well we have. A front. And a back. So God is describing himself. As he often does. In human terms.

It's what you call in theology. An anthropomorphism. It's the same as. When we read in Genesis chapter 2. That God walked. In the cool of the garden. God doesn't have to walk. He doesn't have legs.

[27 : 28] God is a whole. God is the spirit. He's invisible. And yet. This is the way. He describes himself. So that we will understand. As much as we possibly can understand.

Of what happened here. So what did Moses see. Well God describes it as his back. What does it mean. Here's what I believe it means. It means this. That. Which.

Can. Be seen. By us. Of God. Let me say that again. It means. God showed him.

As much. As possible. Of himself. As what. Could be seen. By Moses. That. Which.

Could be seen. Of God. By Moses. As he passed by. He saw. As much. As it was possible. To see. Of the glory.

[28 : 23] Of God. Now what did he see? What did he see? Well we don't know. What he saw. We know that he had been struck.

By the almost addictive. Glory of God. From the burning bush. I don't use that word lightly. But when. When we see God. It's.

It's got such a compelling. Drawing power. When was the first time. That Moses had ever seen. The glory of God. He saw it in the burning bush. And whilst he had to hide his face. Because he was afraid.

To look at God. At the same time. He was absolutely fascinating. More than fascinating. It was a sight. That he never. Ever forgot. His whole life. It got to him.

It grabbed him. It became the focus. Of his life. It became the empowering force. In his life. It became the guiding force. In his life. He had never seen anything before.

[29 : 19] It had shaken him. To his very core. And so it might. It would be the same. I hope. With you and I. If we see. The glory of God. But we have. God has shown us his glory.

In the person. Of Jesus Christ. What was it? The apostle said. The apostle said. We have beheld. We beheld his glory. The glory. As of the only begotten.

Of the father. Full of grace. And truth. If you want to see. The glory of God. You turn. To Jesus Christ. That's where God is revealed to us.

In his fullness. And that is as much. As we can see. Who would want any more? We've got as much in Jesus. As we would ever need. And as we would ever want.

This side. Of eternity itself. So Moses had already been. Drawn. By the glory of God. And you see the more. Once it gets to you.

[30 : 14] The more. You want to see. It gets into your heart. God becomes everything. That's what the Christian life is all about. A person who follows Jesus. Is a person who has seen.

The glory of God. And has understood. The glory of God. And has. It has caught you. It has laid hold upon you. It has drawn you. Into a world.

That perhaps you never ever thought. You would ever see. Before you were a Christian. And it's become everything. Just the same way. As it became to Moses.

That's where he went. When he. When he was at his lowest. Where did he seek refuge in? He sought refuge. In the Lord. In the glory of God. The nearness of God. The presence of God.

Because he knew. That he could come straight. Into the presence of God. And it's the same with us. We can too. We can. Come straight. Into the presence of God. We don't have to go through. Any procedure.

[31 : 07] There's no hierarchy. There's no exams to pass. There's no steps to climb. We go straight. Into the presence of God. We forget that. Don't we? When we pray. Very often we think.

Oh well I can't pray. I'm not in the right frame of mind. To pray. That's not true. You can pray.

Whatever frame of mind. You're in. And if you're in the wrong frame of mind.

What more. Do you need. Than to ask God. To take away. The frame of. The wrong frame of mind.

And to put you in the right frame of mind. Only God can do that. The answer is prayer.

And tonight. We can come straight. As we are. Where we are. Into the presence of God. Knowing that. We are entitled to do so. As his children.

As his people. And I wonder also. I'll leave this with you. I have no basis for saying this. Really.

[32 : 07] But I'll say it anyway. When God showed Moses. What could be seen of his glory. I wonder. I wonder.

I wonder. If he saw. Jesus. What more. Could he show him.

What better scene. What better vision. Could there have been. Than the son of God himself. God made man. God.

That's what the disciples said. We. Have seen his glory. Who was he talking about. He's talking about Jesus. And we can say the same thing.

Tonight. That he who has seen me. Said Jesus. Has seen. The father. That's how we see God. In the face. Of Jesus Christ. Christ. By discovering him.

[33 : 04] By coming to him. And surrendering to him. To his lordship. And to his power. And to his forgiveness. And following. Him. Moses saw.

What could be seen. Of God. And we have that. Same privilege. This evening. We don't need to go up to the top of the mountain. We don't need to go into a cave. We don't need to hide. For part of the time.

We come straight to the bible. We come straight to the lord Jesus Christ. And we see. As much as is possible to see. Of God himself.

That's the tremendous privilege. And you know what. This evening. God is going to hold us accountable. For what we did. With that vision. He's tonight. Showing us himself.

He's done it often. Every time you walked in that door. Every time you opened the pages of the bible. God is showing us. Who he is. What he has done for us. In Jesus Christ. He is giving us that invitation.

[34 : 01] Time and again. To come and to trust in him. And he's going to one day. Hold us accountable. What did you do with that invitation? Did you accept it? Did you come to me? Did you come?

Did you. Did you ask for my forgiveness? That I could have given you. In an instant in time. I could have taken away all your sin. And you didn't ask. That's a very solemn thought.

What are you doing with the privilege. Of being here. This evening. Where we're listening to the very voice. Of God himself. And God is offering.

To show you something. That you have never seen before. And the likes of which. You will never see. Again. Please listen to this.

It's the most important message. You're ever going to hear. Your whole life. Because it comes. From God. I want to ask this last question. Why did God.

[35 : 00] Show Moses his glory. Pretty obvious question. I want to ask it anyway. Why did he. Show him.

His glory. Answer. Because he asked. That was his prayer. And that is a prayer.

That God. Will always. Answer. When you come to God. In prayer. What do you pray for? You pray for safety.

Pray for guidance. You pray for security. Pray for health. Perhaps you pray for success. Perhaps you're thankful. In prayer. All of these things are good.

But here's a prayer. That God will always. Answer. If you ask him tonight. Lord.

[35 : 59] Show me. Your glory. He'll answer it. But it's a dangerous prayer. Because as God shows himself to us.

He shows us. For what we really are. And how much we need him. And how. Guilty we are. And how filthy we are. And how shameful we are. In our hearts. He opens up. The Pandora's box. Of all our guilt. And shame. But as God shows us his glory. He shows us what he's done. In Jesus Christ.

And how his only son. Came into this world. God. And lovingly. Laid down his life. On the cross. For us.

To bring us to God. So that by his death. We can be saved. And forgiven. That's what it means. For God to show us. His.

[36 : 58] Glory. So. Are you ready to pray that prayer? Lord. Show me. Your glory. I believe. I believe with all my heart. That he will do that. He will. Answer the prayer. Of those who truly. Seek to know him. Let's pray. Father in heaven. We ask now. Tonight. That you will. Bring your word to us. In all its power. We pray Lord. That you will meet with us. Pray that you will show us. Yourself. Show us your glory. In Jesus Christ. There is no other glory. That we can see. Other than. [37 : 55] The face of Jesus Christ. We ask Lord. That you will show us. Perhaps. We have been confused. This evening. Perhaps. There has been. Language. That we have not. Quite been able to understand. We have looked at a passage. Which is so full of mystery. So full. Of the very being of God. And yet Lord. It is your word. Make us understand it. We pray. And draw us. Increasingly to it. In our need. In our sin. To be forgiven. And to. Be born again. We pray Lord. That you will do a great work. Amongst us. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.