

Types and Shadows

10

The Torn Veil

In this last lesson of **Module 107**, we will wrap up our study of Old Testament types and shadows with a look at what could be called the central theme of both Old and New Testaments – the revelation of God’s glory.

We’ll begin our lesson with Moses in **Exodus 33:18** and what appears, on the surface, to be a simple request:

“Then Moses said, ‘Now show me your glory.’”

Let’s take a closer look at this verse. You will notice that there are two significant words related to Moses’ request:

- “Then...”
- “Now...”

Both these words have the meaning of “following what has preceded.” These words are “context signals” – they indicate that the statement is not meant to stand on its own but has a context that needs to be understood.

For example, if you were to pick up a “whodunnit” novel, flip to a random page, and read the words, “*Then* Inspector Jones said, ‘*Now* let’s speak to the butler,’” you would know that something significant had just happened that has caused the police inspector to suspect the butler. You would want to read the preceding page or two to find out the context of the inspector’s statement.

In the same way, those five simple words in Moses’ request – “*Now* show me your glory!” – has a context that reveals the depth of his heart. For when we see what Moses had already experienced, we would think that he *already* had seen the glory of the Lord!

A Tapestry of Types

The Tabernacle of Moses

The Tabernacle of David

The Sacrificial System

The Restoration of the Temple

The Gates of Jerusalem

The Feasts of Israel

Two Mountains

The High Priest


 The Torn Veil

The Experience of Moses

What was it that had Moses already seen? What had Moses already experienced, prior to making this request?

Moses had already witnessed seven awesome events:

- **The burning bush** – supernatural fire and the voice of God! (**Exodus 3:1-6**)
- **The miracles of Egypt** – signs, wonders and miracles! (**Psalm 105:26-45; Exodus 7-11**)
- **The Angel of the Lord** – in a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire, protecting (**Exodus 14:19-20**) and guiding (**Exodus 13:21-22; Psalm 78:14**)
- **The parting of the Red Sea** – passing over on dry ground, between walls of water on either side (**Psalm 78:12-13; Exodus 13:17-14:31**)
- **Miraculous provision** – God supernaturally meeting their needs for food and water (**Exodus 16:2-17:7; 15:22-25**)
- **The Tent of Meeting** – the pillar of cloud descending on the inner sanctuary of the Tabernacle and God speaking with Moses “face to face” as to a friend (**Exodus 33:7-11**)
- **The awesome presence of God on Mount Sinai** – God revealing himself in his holiness, expressed in cloud, fire, earthquake, thunder, lightning, a supernatural trumpet blast sounding from heaven, the voice of God speaking, and the judgment of God poured out (**Exodus 14:19-20**)

In the giving of the Law, the revelation of God in his holiness was terrifying. Even though God came down on the mountain veiled in the midst of a dense cloud, the revelation of his glory was so awesome that the people were filled with fear and cried out for it to stop (**Exodus 19:16; 20:18-19**). Even Moses himself was overwhelmed. “The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, ‘I am trembling with fear’” (**Hebrews 12:18-21**).

All of this is the context of Moses’ request in **Exodus 33:18**. Together with the rest of Israel, Moses had already seen the cloud of God’s glory descend on the mountain. He had already seen the consuming fire of God’s radiant presence. He had heard the heavenly trumpet sounding louder and louder; the accompanying thunder and lightning and violent shaking of the mountain, and then the awesome sound of the voice of God himself proclaiming his righteous Law. But Moses had experienced *even more* than the rest of Israel. He had actually gone up the mountain into the heart of the cloud – into the very midst of all the fire, the lightning and the thunder – right into the glorious presence of God.

This brings us right up to **Exodus 33**. At the beginning of this chapter, in **verses 1-2**, God encourages Moses to go on to the Promised Land and gives him two special promises:

- “You have my WORD” – **verse 1**
- “You have my ANGEL” – **verse 2**

Nothing more was needed for the people of Israel to possess the Promised Land. These two things – the Word of God and the Angel of God – were all that were necessary to fulfill God’s promise to Abraham. But one thing God refused to do. He told Moses that his own presence would not accompany them.

In order to understand God’s reluctance to personally accompany the people of Israel to Canaan, we need to be reminded of what had just happened at the base of the mountain (read **Exodus 32**). In setting up the Golden Calf while Moses was up on the mountain, the Israelites were make two clear statements:

- Firstly, they believed Moses to be dead because, in their minds, no one could possibly survive in the presence of such an awesome holy God – (**Exodus 32:1**). He had, after all, been up on the mountain for forty days and forty nights! (**Exodus 24:16-17**).
- Secondly, they did not want a God of such glorious and fearful righteousness to lead them and be with them (**Exodus 32:4**). They preferred a god of their own making, a god they were familiar with in Egypt, a god that made no demands on their life – the Golden Calf.

It was because of his love and mercy that God announced to Moses that he would not personally go with them, in case his righteous judgment destroyed them on the way (**Exodus 33:3-6**). But, at the repentance of the people and the plea of Moses – “If you’re not going with us, Lord, then I’m not going” – the Lord relented and gave his third promise:

- “You have my PRESENCE” – **verse 14**

What more could Moses possibly need? How many of *us* would be satisfied with what Moses had experienced so far. Like Moses, we too have:

- **His Word** – we have been given the Word of God to establish us and to guide us (**John 17:14**)
- **His mighty angels** – they are ministering spirits sent to minister on our behalf (**Hebrews 1:13**)
- **His presence** – Jesus has promised that he would never leave us nor forsake us (**Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20**)

What more could we want or need? And what more could Moses possibly want? So it is only now, having had a look at the background context of **Exodus 33:18** that we can fully appreciate the depth of Moses’ request:

“Then Moses said, ‘Now show me your glory’”

For in this request we see the priority of Moses’ heart – what he desired more than anything else in this world. The revelation of the full glory of God.

Show Me Your Glory

Let's think about Moses' request for a moment. When Moses asked God, "Show me your glory," what was he actually asking for? Surely he had *already* seen the glory of God, if what we've read so far is anything to go by! He had seen the power of God routinely demonstrated in his ministry! He had fellowshiped with God like a friend and had heard his voice in the Tabernacle. So what was it that Moses was after? What did Moses mean by, "Show me your glory"?

God's reply in **Exodus 33:20** indicates what it was that Moses desired:

"You cannot see my *face*, for no one may see me and live."

Everything that Moses had witnessed so far had not been the fullness of God's glory revealed. It had been shielded by cloud and only revealed a fraction of God's total splendor. But when Moses asked to see the absolute brilliance of God's glorious presence, without restraint or filter, God's answer was, in effect:

"Sorry, Moses, but I *can't*."

Why was Moses not satisfied with what he had experienced so far? Wouldn't you be? Have you seen a bush burning outside your bedroom window, out of which God has spoken to you in an audible voice, calling you to fulfill a special role in his plan for the nations? Have you seen the power of God part a brook, let alone a major sea? Have you seen waters turned to blood, or fire and hail fall from the sky, or darkness come upon a land due to the judging hand of God? Have you seen God presence himself in a pillar of cloud or a pillar of fire? Wouldn't you think you had "made it" if you had seen even a fraction of what Moses had seen?

Yet Moses wanted to see the face of God! What did he mean by this?

If, when meeting someone for the first time, you took their hand in a handshake and then fixed your eyes on their feet and, speaking to their feet, said, "Oh John, it's so nice to meet you. I've really been looking forward to this," the person you were meeting would think you, quite rightly, mad. When meeting someone we don't speak to their feet, even though their feet are a part of them. Neither do we speak to their hand or their arm. Where do we look and what do we speak to? We look right at their face – into their eyes.

Someone has said, "The eyes are the window of the soul." Though the feet and arms are important parts of a person, it is the face that reveals the real person. They are the window looking in on the "inner man." In a person's eyes we see the heart of the person. The face represents the real person.

This was the core desire of Moses' heart and the motivation behind his request. He had heard God's voice within the cloud. He had seen God's "feet," as it were, as he had led them out of Egypt along the path they were to follow (**Psalm 77:19**).

* The "face to face" experience with the Lord Moses was having daily in the Tent of Meeting (**Exodus 33:7-11**) was obviously something different to what Moses was desiring in **Exodus 33:20**. In the Tabernacle, the Lord descended in the cloud, though His presence was there, he was hidden from view. Talking with Moses "face to face" like a friend was a term to signify the heart-to-heart fellowship that the Lord and Moses were having. But Moses desired more.

He had seen “the mighty hand” and “the outstretched arm” of God at work in the demonstration of his miracles and power (**Deuteronomy 7:18-19; Isaiah 52:10; 63:11-12; Jeremiah 27:5; 32:17,20-21**). But when Moses said, “Now show me your glory,” he was asking to look right into the face of God – to know the very depth of his heart, to know him as he really is, to know him in all his glory.

Although God refused Moses’ request – for his own sake – he did provide a solution that partially answered the desire of Moses’ heart.

Hidden Behind His Hand

Read Exodus 33:21-22

Because of the raw impact of God’s unfiltered glory upon sinful man, God hides Moses in the cleft of a rock, where he is protected. Not only does he hide him in the rock, but the Lord also covers the face of the rock with his hand as he passes by so that Moses is veiled from full radiance of God’s glory.

The Lord’s next words to Moses, in **Exodus 33:23**, as expressed by the *New Living Translation*, are:

“Then I will remove my hand, and you will see me from behind. But my face will not be seen.”

Moses never saw the face of God’s full glory. What he saw was “the back” (NIV) of God’s glory. This “trailing off” of God’s radiant presence is described by Isaiah as “the train” of the glory of God that fills the Temple on earth (**Isaiah 6:1-2**). And as God passed by Moses, he proclaimed in words what Moses was seeing:

- ☞ **“The Lord, the Lord...”** – The declaration of God’s covenant Name – literally, Yahweh or “I Am” (**Exodus 3:13-14**) – is equated with the declaration of his nature, everything that God is.
- ☞ **“Compassionate...”** – God “feels” with people in their need. His compassion is always accompanied by action to change their situation (**Psalms 103:13; Matthew 14:14; 20:34; Mark 1:40-42; 2 Corinthians 1:3**).
- ☞ **“Gracious...”** – God is full of grace. He comes to people’s deliverance and help even though they don’t deserve it (**Isaiah 30:18-19**). Even under the Old Covenant, grace was revealed, but this grace would come to its fullest expression in Christ, under the New Covenant (note **John 1:16-17**).
- ☞ **“Slow to anger...”** – Guilty though people are, God always moves toward forgiveness and reconciliation (**Psalms 103:8-11**). Although God does express his wrath against willful sin (**Psalms 7:11**), he never loses his temper, and his tolerance is amazingly long (**Romans 2:4**).
- ☞ **“Abounding in love...”** – God’s love for each individual is immeasurable! (**Ephesians 3:14-20**). It is so excessive that it is described as “abounding” – overflowing, surpassing, beyond one’s ability to measure or contain!

- **“Faithful...”** – God is totally trustworthy and true to his word (**Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 33:4-5; 111:7-8; 145:13; 100:5; 108:4; 117:2**).
- **“Maintaining love...”** – God’s love never fails. It endures forever (**2 Chronicles 5:13; Psalm 136**).
- **“Forgiving...”** – So great is God’s love, God is ready to forgive those who turn to him (**Nehemiah 9:17; Daniel 9:9; 1 John 1:9**).
- **“Does not let the guilty go unpunished...”** – Although characterized by love, mercy and forgiveness, God is still a righteous judge, bringing justice against sin and wickedness (**Psalm 9:8**).

What we need to remember is that the revelation that Moses received on Sinai is not the fullness of the revelation of who God is. This is simply the “back parts” of God’s glory! This is the limit of the revelation of God’s nature possible under the Old Covenant! For everything God revealed of himself to Moses had to do with his relationship to sinful mankind on earth in the context of the Law.

But even that revelation of God’s glory was enough! Although Moses didn’t see the face of God’s full glory, what he did see impacted him dramatically. For as a witness to the glory of God, Moses was not simply a spectator. He was not just *observing* God’s glory but was *experiencing* what he saw. Such was Moses’ interaction with the glory of God, when he came down from the mountain, without realizing it, his face was radiant with the *reflection* of the glory he had experienced (**Exodus 34:29-35; 2 Corinthians 3:7-11**). In fact, so radiant was his face, he had to wear a veil to protect the people of Israel from the reflected “trailing off” of the glory of God!

The Need for a Veil

Mankind’s fallen condition became an obstacle that separated us from the glory of God’s presence. In order for man to come close to God, a barrier was needed to set up – to filter or shield the blazing glory of God from sinful man. This is clearly depicted in God’s dealings with mankind throughout the Old Testament. Take a look at these examples:

- **The flaming sword** – Following their sin, God banishes Adam and Eve from the Garden, placing mighty cherubim and a “flaming sword flashing back and forth” to bar the way to the tree of life (**Genesis 3:23-24**).
- **God’s covering hand** – God’s hand shielded Moses from his full glory (**Exodus 33:20-23**). The hand of God acted like a barrier or veil, protecting Moses from exposure to the face of God.
- **The veil over Moses’ face** – When Moses came down from the mountain after the Lord had passed in front of him, the people could not stand to look at even the *reflection* in Moses’ face of the limited glory of the Lord he had witnessed! He had to wear a thick veil over his face until the reflected glory had faded away (**2 Corinthians 3:13; Exodus 34:29-35**).

- **The shielding curtain** – With the provision of the Law, God also gave Israel the design of the Tabernacle they were to build (**Hebrews 8:5**). There he would descend and meet with them (**Exodus 25:22; 40:17,34-35**), his glory shielded behind the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holiest of All.

At the entrance of each of the three compartments of the Tabernacle, the people were instructed to put a shielding curtain — a veil (**Exodus 26:31-33; 40:21**) — with strict regulations as to who and when they could pass through each veil. When the glory of God descended on the Tabernacle, his presence rested in the third compartment, beyond the third veil. This was for the protection of the people, so that God could presence his *full* glory in their midst without the “consuming fire” of his righteous glory annihilating them. Only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, could one man, the high priest, enter through that third veil into the presence of God in all his glory.

As we saw in the last lesson, the high priest entered beyond that last veil as the representative of all the people, so that God would accept them through him. Bells and pomegranates were sewn around the hem of his robe (**Exodus 28:33-35**). When the high priest entered the Most Holy Place, the tinkling sound of the bells as he moved about on the other side of the veil let the priests on the other side of the veil know that he was still alive. Such was their reverence for God’s command prohibiting entry beyond the veil, it is reported that a rope was tied around the waist of the high priest, so that if he should not survive entry into the Holiest of All, the priests on the other side of the veil could pull his dead body out, without needing to enter the prohibited chamber themselves.

All this was due to one simple reality: sinful man could not enter into the presence of a holy God. As the writer to the Hebrews explains it in **Hebrews 9:8**:

“The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place *had not yet been disclosed...*”

Jesus as the Veil

In the light of all this, **Hebrews 10:19-22** is stunning in its revelation of what was being enacted in the death of Christ upon the Cross:

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us *through the curtain*, that is, *his body*...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart is full assurance of faith...”

On the Cross, Jesus became the veil! His body, which had housed the full presence of God’s glory, shielding the glory from the eyes of sinful man, symbolized the barrier between God and mankind. As he hung upon the Cross, Christ became the dividing curtain between sinful man and God! He was hanging between heaven and earth as everything that separated mankind from the God of all glory!

He was taking upon himself the totality of the devastating effects of Adam and Eve's sin – the total fallen condition of the human race.

Read Matthew 27:50-51

At the precise moment of Jesus' death upon the Cross, the curtain of the Temple – the final, innermost veil that blocked entry to the Most Holy Place – was rent from top to bottom. The Jewish historian Josephus reported that the veil was four inches thick and that horses tied to each side could not pull it apart.¹ Yet in one moment of time, God took hold of it from heaven and ripped it apart! The veil – that which separated us from the glory of God – was gone!

The significance of this tearing of the veil cannot be overstated. That split second, when the curtain was rent, changed the history of mankind forever. How the angels must have looked on in silent awe as this historic event took place. Man now had unrestricted entry into the fully glory of God!

In answer to **Hebrews 9:8**, the way into the Holiest of All has now been disclosed! According to **Hebrews 10:19-21**, this “way into the Most Holy Place” is made possible because we have:

- **A perfect sacrifice** – “...by the blood of Jesus...”
- **A perfect covenant** – “...by a new and living way...”
- **A perfect high priest** – “...[by] a great priest over the house of God...”

An Open Heaven

Everything that had been lost in the Garden of Eden is now restored in Christ. By the Cross, Jesus undid and reversed the work of the Evil One (note **1 John 3:8**). The way is once again open into the glory of God! Each and every day, we have an open heaven, with full access privileges into the presence of God!

Bearing in mind Moses' request in **Exodus 33:18** and God's denial of that request in **33:20**, take a look now at these two extracts from the book of **Hebrews**:

- **4:14-16** – “Therefore, since we have a great high priest *who has gone through the heavens*, Jesus the Son of God...Let us then approach the throne of grace *with confidence*...”
- **10:19-22** – “Therefore, brothers, since *we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place* by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us *through the curtain...let us draw near to God* with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith...”

Can you see what the writer to the Hebrews is telling us? We have received not just an entry pass into God's glory, but an invitation to do so *boldly*. There was no way that anyone in the Old Covenant – not even the high priest – could enter into the Most Holy Place with anything close to a sense of confidence. Remember Moses? Even he was “trembling with fear” at the prospect of climbing Sinai. Yet we are invited to enter boldly! In fact, Paul in **2 Corinthians 3:12-13** puts it this way:

“Therefore, since we have such a hope, *we are very bold*. We are *not* like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away.”

This boldness would have astounded Moses and any person living under the Old Covenant. But this is a boldness that derives from a single historic event – the rending of the veil in the Temple at the moment of Christ’s death on the Cross.

The Surpassing Glory

Read 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

This entire chapter compares the glory that Moses experienced on Sinai with the glory that is now available for you to experience. Let’s take a look at exactly what Paul is telling us in this chapter.

- **Verse 7-9** – Even the covenant that produced death and condemnation came with a glory that the Israelites could not gaze upon. Yet this glory was only a reflected, fading glory. In comparison, the covenant of the Spirit is far more glorious.
- **Verse 10-11** – What was glorious (and quite spectacularly so) at the base of Mount Sinai cannot really be compared with the glory revealed under the New Covenant. This new glory is called a “surpassing glory” – in other words, it far exceeds the glory revealed to and through Moses. For the glory revealed to Moses was a fading glory, but the glory in which we now enter is “an overwhelming glory that excels and exceeds it” (*Amplified Bible*). One fades while the other increases.
- **Verse 12-13** – Because of this hope of a surpassing glory, we are (unlike Moses and the people of the Old Covenant) *very bold*. Also unlike Moses, we don’t need to put a veil over our faces to shield ourselves or others from the radiance of God’s glory.
- **Verse 14-16** – Outside of Christ, a veil still covers the heart of people, but as soon as someone turns to Christ, the veil is taken away. The experience of the Christian has been designed by God to be a “veilless” experience!
- **Verse 17** – What makes the New Covenant different from the Old, in its outworking, is the indwelling presence and activity of the Holy Spirit, the one who reveals the glory of God and enables us to participate in it.
- **Verse 18** – Our unveiled experience in Christ results in two things happening – 1) a *reflecting* of God’s glory (like Moses, but without the need for a veil); and 2) a *transforming* “from glory to glory” (KJV) and “with ever-increasing glory” (NIV) into the likeness of the Lord himself.

You can now express the same desire as Moses: “Lord, show me your glory. I want to see your face!” But whereas the Lord’s answer to Moses was, “No, I cannot,” to us, because of the Cross, his answer is, “Yes! Enter boldly!” No wonder

John Newton penned the words:

*Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see!*

*When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun!*

Read 2 Corinthians 4:4-7

God has designed you to be a container of his glory. You are a jar of clay, but with a matchless treasure inside. And God planned it this way so as “to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”

But what is the treasure? Paul tells us in **verse 6**. The treasure that you have is “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God”!

What Moses longed for but could never have, you now have! Because of the torn veil, God has “made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the *face of Christ*”!

¹ *Ryrie Study Bible*, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0, Deluxe Edition.

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