

## **Exodus 33:18-23; 34:5-7**

<sup>18</sup>Then Moses said, “Please show me your glory.”

<sup>19</sup>The LORD said, “I will make all my goodness pass in front of you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD in your presence. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy.” <sup>20</sup>He said, “You cannot see my face, for no human may see me and live.”

<sup>21</sup>The LORD also said, “Look, there is a place next to me, where you shall stand on the rock. <sup>22</sup>It will happen that, while my glory passes by, I will put you in a crevice in the rock. I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. <sup>23</sup>Then I will take away my hand, and you will see my back. But my face will not be seen.”

<sup>34:5</sup>The LORD came down in the cloud. He took his stand there with Moses and proclaimed the name of the LORD. <sup>6</sup>The LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed: “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and overflowing with mercy and truth, <sup>7</sup>maintaining mercy for thousands, forgiving guilt and rebellion and sin. He will by no means clear the guilty. He calls their children and their children’s children to account for the guilt of the fathers, even to the third and the fourth generation.”

## **God Gives Himself as One of Us**

### **I.**

He wanted to see. He had received many instructions. Some of them had been a bit out there, if he were to be honest. Talk to Pharaoh. Drop your staff on the ground; it will turn into a snake; grab the snake by the tail and it will turn back into your staff. Forecast the coming of plagues—the last of which was truly horrendous.

Then, as you lead the whole People of Israel out of the land of Egypt, head straight for the shores of an uncrossable lake. Stand there with your staff outstretched, and I will make the water stand up in walls on each side so the people can pass through on dry ground. Then stretch out your staff again and the walls of water will come crashing down on the Egyptian threat and drown them all.

Come up Mt. Sinai—into the thunder and lightning and the dark cloud—and I will give you my instructions for the people. Go down and deal with the people who have formed a Golden Calf, as if it were their god. Now come back up the mountain so I can give you the re-run of the Law to take back down to the people again.

Moses had done it all. He had been living by faith, following all those instructions and more. But he wanted to live by sight; not a lot—just a little bit. He wanted to *see* some evidence of the One whose instructions he had been following so faithfully. “Please show me your glory” (Exodus 33:18, EHV).

“The LORD said, ‘I will make all my goodness pass in front of you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD in your presence...’ <sup>20</sup> ... “You cannot see my face, for no human may see me and live” (Exodus 33:19-20, EHV).

### **II.**

Centuries later Peter, James, and John were with Jesus on top of another mountain—the Mount of Transfiguration. They saw him change, right before their very eyes. They saw Jesus and his clothing become a dazzling white. But then, a bright cloud appeared and a voice spoke from the cloud. They fell face down. Matthew reports that they were terrified. Even a cloud of the glory of the Lord was too much to handle.

Sometimes we just want to see. False teachers have profited by Christian’s desire to have

just a little glimpse of the glory. They write books and make movies about people who claim to have seen heaven or been to heaven. We aren't told we get to see such things.

Jesus once told about a rich man who found himself in hell. He begged Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers so they wouldn't experience the same hell he had to deal with. Abraham told him: "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31, EHV).

Rather than looking for something we haven't been given—or begging for things God has chosen not to give us—we would do well to pay attention to what he *has* given us.

### III.

In the case of Moses, God said: "Look, there is a place next to me, where you shall stand on the rock. <sup>22</sup>It will happen that, while my glory passes by, I will put you in a crevice in the rock. I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. <sup>23</sup>Then I will take away my hand, and you will see my back. But my face will not be seen" (Exodus 33:21-23, EHV).

God granted his grace to Moses. He was allowed to see a little glimpse of God's glory, much like Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Paul says to the Corinthians: "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7, EHV). We aren't like Peter, James, and John, who were with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration and saw a glimpse of his glory. We aren't Moses, whom God hid in the cleft of a rock while he passed by in his glory. We *do* have the Christmas gospel. We heard John speak of the Word made flesh.

God sent his glory to live among us, veiled in the flesh of a human being. We have seen his glory, the true glory of God. He came in a stable in Bethlehem. His first bed was a feeding trough. But *he* is the One God promised from the very first sin. Jesus is the One who came with all the glory of God to deal with sin, once and for all.

John says: "No one has ever seen God. The only-begotten Son, who is close to the Father's side, has made him known" (John 1:18, EHV). Jesus has made God known to us. Jesus has brought God's plan of salvation to completion for us.

### IV.

"The LORD passed by in front of [Moses] and proclaimed: "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and overflowing with mercy and truth, <sup>7</sup>maintaining mercy for thousands, forgiving guilt and rebellion and sin. He will by no means clear the guilty. He calls their children and their children's children to account for the guilt of the fathers, even to the third and the fourth generation"" (Exodus 34:6-7, EHV).

God is true to his promises. He knew all about our sins. But he is compassionate and gracious. He is slow to anger and overflowing with mercy and truth. God forgives guilt and rebellion and sin.

God didn't "clear the guilty." He didn't just write rebellion and sin off sin as bad debt that can't be paid. He set up the system of sacrifices Moses taught the people for their temple worship. Those sacrifices didn't actually deal with sin, but pointed ahead to the sacrifice that *would* make sure that sin was paid for in full.

The Word made flesh paid it in full. The little Baby in a manger was born to dwell among us and live the perfect life we could not live. Jesus paid the price on the cross for your sins and mine. He was the sacrifice all the Old Testament sacrifices pointed ahead to.

God overflows with mercy and truth for you and me. Do we get to see his full glory? In a sense, no. Just as God told Moses, no human being can see him and live. But we *do* see the glimpse of God's glory in his Gift to the world. God gives himself as One of us to make sure we will see all his glory when he calls us to himself in heaven.

Thank God for the precious gift of his Son. Amen.