

Exodus: New and Old

Week 5 - God's Presence with His People

Theme: In this study, we'll be looking at Moses' relationship with God and how Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise to Moses and to his people.

Read to the group: Exodus 34: 4-8

⁴ So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the Lord had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. ⁵ Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. ⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."

⁸ Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped. ⁹ "Lord," he said, "if I have found favor in your eyes, then let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance."

Exodus 34: 27-35

²⁹ When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. ³⁰ When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹ But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. ³² Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai.

³³ When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. ³⁴ 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, ³⁵ 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.

The Jewish symbolism of clouds: Verse five mentions a cloud. In Jewish thought, the presence of God is regularly connected with a cloud. It was a pillar of cloud and fire that led the Jews out of Egypt. It was in the cloud that Moses met God. It was through a cloud that God came to the Tabernacle. It was the cloud that filled the Temple when it was dedicated after Solomon had built it. In Jesus' day, the Jews dreamed that when the Messiah came, the cloud of God's presence would return to the Temple. (Exodus 16:10, 19:9, 33:9, 1 Kings 8:10)

? How do we see God's presence with Moses and with His people in these verses?

? What do verses 4-8 say about the character of God?

2 Corinthians 3:13 says, "We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away." Based on this passage, Paul explains that

Moses wanted the people to see the Glory of God reflecting off his face, but he didn't want them to see it fade.

? Given the context of 2 Corinthians, why do you think Moses didn't want the people to see the radiance of his face fade?

? Our faces aren't going to literally shine like Moses' did. What does "shining" look like in our culture?

? Moses' face was radiant because he spent time in God's presence. What can we do to improve our time in God's presence so that we can better reflect His glory?

PART TWO

Read to the group:

Mark 9:2-10 (NIV)

² Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

⁵ Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) ⁷ Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. ⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰ They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant.

The significance of Jesus' shine: In Greco-Roman culture, miraculous transformations in appearance often signaled the manifestation of deities who otherwise chose to conceal themselves behind mortal facades. These were called theophanies. The writer of Mark is likely making a commentary on theophanies by highlighting Jesus' transformation and showcasing His divinity.

Why does Peter want to set up shelters? The Jewish festival of Sukkot (Tabernacles) was a time when Israel lived in temporary booths to commemorate how God delivered them from Egypt (Leviticus 23:42–43). Later Jewish tradition associated these booths with the shelter of God's presence, which protected Israel through the wilderness to the promised land in the form of a cloud.

Why does Jesus order his disciples "not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead?" If the disciples had told others that Jesus was God, the Pharisees would have killed Him for blaspheming. At this point in history, it was not time for Jesus to die. By waiting until Christ's resurrection to share this news, the disciples were able to understand what Jesus meant when he said he would rise from the dead. They understood that he had fulfilled the law and the prophets.

? What are the similarities between Moses' and Jesus' experiences?

? Jesus' transfiguration is somewhat different from Moses' experience after the mountaintop. What are these differences and why are they significant?

? The Jews saw Moses as the supreme law-giver of Israel, while Elijah was the first and greatest of the prophets. Why do you think it is significant that Jesus met with these two men on the mountaintop?

? In both Mark 9:7 and Exodus 34:5-7, God makes His presence known as a voice in the clouds. What is God declaring?

? How is God present with us today?

? How does the Holy Spirit equip us to proclaim Jesus' presence in the world and to reflect His glory?

? What is our community application?