

Exodus 34: The Glory of God

Member Guide 11/08/09



PLEASE NOTE! – Presently, Summit Church is studying Exodus 19-34 during corporate worship and in small groups. While the small groups will study these texts in order, the sermon may not correspond to the precise chapter week by week. However, the themes that pervade both sermon and small group will overlap considerably. On Sundays and throughout the week, the goal is to grow in our understanding and respond rightly as a church to the Holy God who appeared to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. Also, please use the prayer guide based on the themes of this text.

Context: Exodus 34 contains the last section of the ongoing conversation between Moses and God. The issue at hand is: how this holy and just God can have His Presence dwell among a sinful people, while displaying His glory to the world. Moses has interceded for Israel and begged God to uphold the relationship according to God's unconditional promises to Abraham. God has declared that He will remain with the people and, in chapter 34, He reinstates the Covenant that the people had broken. Moses has one more request- to see God's glory (33:18). God replies that He can proclaim His name, but that Moses cannot see His face (33:19-23), presumably because it is too glorious for Moses to see.

The proclamation of God's glory is foreshadowed in 20:6, 33:19, and stated more robustly in 34:6-7. The glory of God is that He is both compassionate and just, able to forgive but will also punish the guilty. Exodus has revealed much about God's character: He is the Great "I AM (3:14)," the Savior and Redeemer (6:6-8), the God able to do wonders, and the God who creates a just society. But this is the revelation about God (34:6-7) that is called God's glory! Moses falls down to worship at this new understanding of God knowing that, because this is God's nature, the people will be forgiven and the covenant renewed¹. For all the times that Moses has communed with God in Exodus, it is a result of this ultimate revelation of God's glory that Moses comes down off the mountain with a radiant face.

Theme: There is little hope in these passages that Israel will ever display righteousness that is required of them. Even in chapter 34, God restores the Covenant knowing full well that they are a "stiff-necked people (34:9)." God declares that He will show wonders to the people, more than He already has. The first sign is the radiant face of Moses, but the people withdrew in fear as they had at Mount Sinai when God spoke to them (20:18-19). This anticipates the perpetual unfaithfulness that Israel exhibits throughout the Hebrew Scriptures (see Neh. 9:6-37 for a concise history of Israel along this point). If the people could not turn to the Lord in the wake of the Exodus and Mount Sinai, when would they? How would a just God maintain this Covenant with a stiff-necked people? When would He wipe them from the face of the earth to satisfy the justice that is central to His character? Their only hope was in God's glory, that though He requires justice, He is also forgiving and compassionate. He would remain faithful to the unconditional Covenant He made with Abraham even when the people were not. Forgiveness was a necessary and perpetual aspect of God's relationship with His people

The glory of God, as stated in 34:6-7, is repeated throughout the Old Testament (Neh. 9:17, 31, Ps. 86:15, 103:8, Jonah 4:2, Joel 2:13, et al). However, it is never more clearly displayed than in the Cross of Christ. On the Cross, Jesus took the penalty and guilt for the sin of thousands of generations upon Himself. The guilty was punished at Calvary, for the sake of all who had sinned from the beginning of time until now. In the gospel, God proves His Justice and also extends forgiveness and mercy to all who will receive it. 2 Corinthians 3-4 says that the glory of Jesus Christ outshines the radiant face of Moses, because it is the Cross of Christ which displays the glory of God most clearly (2 Cor. 4:4-6).

Aim: To look boldly into the glory of God until we are changed by it permanently.

¹ The Covenant is renewed with the statement by God that He will do even more wonders among the people (34:10). Then, various aspects of the Law are reaffirmed and the tablets for the Ten Words are remade. The restatement of the Law in 34:11-26 is likely a summary recapitulating *all* that is required of the people in Exodus 12-23; from celebrating the Passover (Ex. 12:43-51), consecrating firstborn (13:1-2), and worshipping in the new land (13:3-16) to keeping the 1st, 2nd, and 4th commandment (Ex. 20:2-11) and rules for proper worship (23:10-19, the last verse in the law concerning boiling goats, cf. 34:26). The emphasis is on the first four commandments because it is in their devotion to God that the Israelites have failed.

Prayer: Use the points below to thank God for your salvation:

- take a moment of silence to confess your sins before God
- express your sorrow at the penalty that Jesus had to pay for us all
- thank Him for His unending mercy, compassion, and forgiveness
- thank Him for showing us His glory in the cross and ask Him for more of His glory in our lives!

Study Questions:

What were some key points that were helpful for you from the sermon and text this week?

[34:1-9]

How has God shown justice (not letting the guilty go unpunished) in Exodus thus far?

How has God shown mercy and compassion in Exodus?

How does Jesus Christ display this same glory?

[34:10-28].

Why does God renew the Covenant with Israel?

What are the marvels and awesome things that God has done as predicted in 34:10?

Did the Law and the marvels that God gave in Exodus achieve their purpose?

[34:29-35, 2 Cor. 3:7-11, 18, 4:4-6]

Why is Jesus' glory more radiant than Moses'?

How is it possible for God to be both just and forgiving in His personal relationship with sinful people?

How is the glory of God on display in your life?

How can your small group put the glory of God on display?