

Exodus 33

Seeing God's Glory

If you attended the satellite broadcast "Case for a Creator" a few weeks ago you heard the account of a life changing event from Dr. Stephen C. Meyer.

When Meyer was a young geophysicist and he dropped in to listen to a conference on science and religion. Some of the best known scientists in the world were speakers that night.

What Stephen Meyer heard that night just blew him away.

First he listened to Dr. Allan R. Sandage who the NY Times dubbed the "Grand Old Man of Cosmology." Sandage is known as the greatest observational cosmologist in the world and has pinpointed the distances of remote galaxies, quantified the universe's expansion, he's won almost every prestigious award in his field.

Every one expected this ethnically Jewish, apparent atheist to blast any idea of a creator.

Instead he not only announced his faith in God, but told how he had become a Christian. This is what he said;

"It was my science that drove me to the conclusion that the world is much more complicated than can be explained by science. It is only through the supernatural that I can understand the mystery of existence."

Along with Sandage that night others professed their confidence in God.

Harvard astrophysicist Owen Gingerich said that what we now know about the origins of the solar system only allow for one conclusion. There's a Creator.

Dean Kenyon who had previously co-authored a book theorizing how non-living matter somehow self-assembled into the first cells stood up and repudiated the theories of his own book.

He said that due to the immense molecular complexity of the cell and the information-bearing properties of DNA he believed that the best evidence pointed to a designer of life.

That night Meyer heard specialists at the highest levels of achievement who said they were theists, not in spite of the scientific evidence, but because of it. As Allan Sandage would later say, "Many scientists are now driven to faith by their very work."

Stephen Myer left that conference that night challenged to investigate. Today He's one of the leading voices in the Intelligent Design movement whose goal is to challenge scientists, educators, and students to the overwhelming case for a Creator.

What's happening? The materialistic explanations for the origin of the universe and physical life are falling to the evidence of scientific discovery.

To put it another way, everywhere we look we see the fingerprints of God. And the more we know about ourselves and the universe the more those fingerprints stand out.

The Bible says this: "*No man has seen God at any time*" (John 1:18)

No one has physically seen the Creator because God is spirit and you can't see spirit.

But the Bible does say this: *The heavens declare the glory of God* (Psalm 19:1) *The heavens declare His righteousness, And all the peoples see His glory.* (Psalm 97:6) *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.* (Romans 1:20)

Do you have trouble seeing God at work in your life? Does your life seem too mixed up or disjointed? Maybe your life is dark and discouraging right now. Maybe your life is unbelievably busy.

Whatever you're going through, God is there leading you, and you'll know it if you'll seek Him.

Open your Bibles to **Exodus 33 pg 81**

Last week we looked at the low point of the Book of Exodus. We studied chapter 32 and the account of the golden calf.

One write said: "For a while, it looked as though Israel's history would abruptly end with a period."

God had faithfully delivered the Hebrew people from their Egyptian slave masters. He had done miracle after mighty miracle for them.

In chapter 20 and following God gave the 10 commandments along with other various laws. In chapter 24 we read: *So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has said we will do."*

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient." (Ex 24:3 & 7)

They said, "We'll do it God. No other gods before you, no idols, the whole deal. We're yours God."

Then Moses is up on the Mountain with God for 6 weeks and they get restless. Finally they pressure Moses' brother Aaron: *"Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." (Ex 32:1)*

And to his shame Aaron gives in to the pressure and makes them a golden calf which they proceed to worship.

Moses comes down, smashes the 2 stone tablets that had the 10 commandments, grinds up the golden calf, puts the powder in water and makes the people drink it.

Moses is understandably angry at the whole bunch, including his brother who's been with him in the ministry from the start.

That brings us to chapter 33. **Read 33:1-4a (through "news")**

I. Even In The Midst of His Anger At Sin, God Is There for Us

God had every right to do what He first said to Moses, "I'll just wipe these guys out and start over with you." God certainly had that right. But these were God's people and God is faithful to His people. Now they did suffer some serious

consequences. There was a plague and serious repercussions, but God didn't just leave them on the side of the road.

Is that how you feel today? Like maybe God's left you on the side of the road?

First of all, let me assure you that He hasn't. God has set His love on this world in a very tangible way.

The Bible says: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

You can't get a more conspicuous, unmistakable, demonstration of God's care. He gave His Son on our behalf so we could be forgiven of our sin.

So why is it that we feel like somehow God isn't there for us? Why do we have trouble seeing His glory?

Maybe more often than not it's because we're not really looking.

God says to Moses, "Go. I'm going to send my angel to lead you to the promised land. I'm going to drive out the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, Amorites, Hivites, Jebusites."

The people that inhabited the land of Canaan, basically what we call Israel today, were some of the most wicked, debauched people that have ever lived. They practiced child sacrifice and every form of sexual perversion imaginable in their religious worship.

Back in Genesis 15 God made a promise to Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land. But then God said it will be a while before that happens because, *"the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."*

God said, "They're bad. But I'm going to give them every chance to turn it around. But there is a limit. When they reach that limit it's all over."

That limit was almost here. In about 40 years God would drive the Amorites and the rest of the "ites" out.

God hadn't forgotten His people. He hadn't deserted them, even though they had deserted Him in the "Golden Calf" thing.

This is going to prompt Moses to ask a series of questions of God.

Read verses 7-9

Moses goes into this tent of meeting, which is the little 't' because it is different than the one in the tabernacle.

Notice this meeting place is outside the camp. Where was the tabernacle? In the middle of the camp. Surrounded by everybody's tents.

This one's outside because God is stressing that He's going to lead them but He's not traveling in their midst right now. Their sin didn't separate them from God entirely, but it did have consequences.

This is the place that Moses now goes to outside the camp to talk to God., and he really needs to have a talk with God.

In verse 12 we have the first of Moses' questions. There's one thing you have to say for Moses, he definitely was on personal terms with the Almighty.

He didn't come like, "Oh Godddd, thou greatest and mightiest of all beings I beseech thee."

He said... **Read vs 12-13**

Moses was never disrespectful to God, but he was open and straightforward. You can tell that there was that sense of identity with God. For Moses God was present and God was listening.

This is what he was asking: "Who are you sending, Lord? Aaron didn't work out too well. Show me Your way. I need to know what you're doing Lord! I'm loosing touch with seeing you in this. There's been a whole lot of unexpected things happen here and I need to know some more details."

God said in verse 1, "I'm sending my angel before you." The word translated "angel" *melek*, in Hebrew, literally means "messenger." It's often used for human messengers.

So Moses didn't know exactly what God was talking about.

Read verse 14

God says, "I'm not going to be present in the middle of everything like I was. The people's sin saw to that. But I am going to be present. My Presence will go with you and I will give you rest." In other words, "I'm not going to leave you hanging. I'll be there and I'll bring you into the land."

"I will give you rest" refers to establishing them in their homeland. Almost always in the Bible, "rest" conveys the concept of putting an end to an evil, an enemy, hostility, or adversity. When God promised Moses "rest" He was assuring him that the things which Moses must have feared most would be overcome. That the task which God had given him to do will be completed.

God has promised us the same thing. If we're in His family by faith then he's going to be with us. Hebrews 13:5 *He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

God has promised to complete the work that He started in our lives:

Phil 1:6 *being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it...*

He will give you rest.

You say, "It sure doesn't feel like it. In fact, my life is so crazy right now: peace, God's purpose, even God's presence, seems like a hollow promise. I don't know exactly what God is doing and I'm struggling to believe. My faith is wearing pretty thin."

We have to always be really careful when we interpret the Bible. I hear people taking verses out of context all the time. They say well this must be true because the Bible says "blank."

And then they quote a passage that has nothing to do with what they're talking about.

We don't want to do that. We want to take into account who is speaking, who they're speaking to, what the situation is they're addressing.

Obviously here God is making a specific promise to Moses that applied to him in a specific way.

But we have plenty of other Scripture to show us that the principle here is true across the board.

Scripture has only one correct interpretation. But once you get that interpretation clarified it often has a whole range of applications.

What God says to Moses here, He says to us in multiple Bible promises: "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

I. Even In The Midst of His Anger At Sin, God Is There for Us

II. If You Want To See God's Glory You Have To Pursue Him

As great as this promise was of God being present and getting him to the end goal of the promised land there was still something more Moses needed.

He goes on to ask for two more things. The first is pretty straightforward.

Moses says, "Confirm to me your talking about everybody here, God."

Look back at God's promise in vs 14 for a minute. If your reading in many translations you'll see that the words "with you" are in italics. The translators use italics to let you know that they're supplying words that aren't there in the original Hebrew text to make the verse flow.

That means that we don't know if the implied "with you" is you singular or "you" plural. What we do know is the second "you" ("I will give you rest") is singular.

That's only a guarantee for Moses, not the nation Israel as a whole so Moses says...**Read 15-16**

Moses says, assure me that that's a plural "you" which God goes on to do.

Then Moses asks for one more thing from God. **Read 18**

Now I'm not totally sure what it was exactly that Moses thought God would do but here he is in a dialog with the Almighty. He's in a back-and-forth, one-on-one conversation with his Creator.

I don't know about you but I'd settle for that sometimes. Wouldn't you like the

chance once in a while to get to ask God some specifics about your life? To say to God "Show me now Your way."

But Moses isn't satisfied with that. Now he says, "God, show me your glory." It was almost like, "Give me something to hang onto here God. This whole Golden Calf deal has really unnerved me. I can't believe my own brother would lead the people in this pagan worship."

"I'm thankful for your promises but could you ratchet it up a notch and show yourself to me."

In the hard times of life we feel especially vulnerable. I imagine that Moses, like us, felt overwhelmed by it all. Moses seemed to need something visible and tangible to hold on to. So he asked God to show him.

Wouldn't it be great for God to appear to us today and tell us that "It's going to be OK?" Don't you wish you could see God and hear Him assure you that "there is a reason and a purpose" behind the events of your life?

He's already done that through the promises of His word. You say, "I know that, but I'm like Moses. I want something more to hold onto."

Look at God's answer here. **Read 19-20**

God tells Moses that He can't see the full force of the splendor of the Almighty. The reason is that no one can see God and live. Now, why is that? Understand the holiness of God is so awesome that it'll consume and destroy everything that is evil. That's the nature of holiness. True holiness cannot put up with that which is sinful because to do so would be to violate the character of God.

And as much as we want to see God's face, as much as we want to hear Him explain so we can understand, we cannot apprehend His glory. We can't understand His ways. They are above us. They are beyond us. They are too lofty for our feeble minds.

Could you imagine sitting down with an infant and teaching them astro physics, or molecular biology? It wouldn't happen. They don't have the capacity to understand. Your words would be totally incomprehensible to them.

Now take that and multiply it a trillion times a trillion and that would be like us understanding God.

There's no way Moses is going to see God's glory for all it's worth.

I. Even In The Midst of His Anger At Sin, God Is There for Us

II. If You Want To See God's Glory You Have To Pursue Him

III. While We Can't See God's Glory Directly, We Can See Evidence Of God All Round Us

Read verses 21-23

God allows Moses to see the aftereffects of His glory. I'm not totally sure of all that means but in some way, Moses was given by God what He needed. He wasn't given what He wanted. He was given what he needed.

God allowed Moses to catch of glimpse of His greatness because a glimpse was all He could handle.

But Moses did get to see it. Moses saw because he didn't give up. Moses saw because he pursued God.

He knew he there was a whole lot more difficulty to face. They'd already fought the Amalekites. Now they faced the other well entrenched inhabitants of Canaan. The people were fickle. They'd lost thousands to God's judgments.

It was like Moses said "I really need God to be evident" and so God made Himself evident.

What does this have to do with our lives today?

We know this for sure - it means God was with Moses. He was there. He listened and he responded.

We know something else too - since Moses sees only God's back, where is God? God is moving ahead. God's leading the way. That's something Moses needed to know. And it is something we need to know too. We need these two things in our arsenal for living. We need to know that God is there, listening, responding and leading the way.

At the funeral home, when we weep with broken hearts and lean on the people we love and cry on their shoulders. At the funeral service, when the Pastor reads the Bible and prays and tells us about the assurance of eternal life, we need to know that God hears and responds. That He's leading the way as the good shepherd.

Then yea though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we will fear no evil.

When our job is on the chopping block, and worry so much about what tomorrow might bring, we need to know that God listens, responds, and continues to lead us.

When it's three o'clock in the morning and your kid hasn't come home yet, and every minute seems like an hour, you need to know God is listening and responding and leading.

We need to know God is out there in charge and leading us and the world. We need to know that in spite of war, terrorism, hatred in the name of religion, in spite of a totally uncertain world God is certain.

We need to know, that we are not alone in a heartless, cold, decaying, materialistic universe, but that God is in charge, and He's leading us somewhere.

Moses saw God, not God's face, but God walking ahead, leading the way. Moses needed that. We need that!

There is one more thing.

The truth is that we sometimes see where God has been by looking back. Not by seeing God's face, but by seeing where he has been where he has passed by.

Here we are like Moses. We want that assurance. We want to see God's glory.

And God is saying to us, "Open your eyes. You're not going to look into this laser beam brightness of my presence. That would vaporize you anyway."

"But your going to see my finger prints everywhere if you'll just look."

Michael Behe is professor of Biochemistry at Lehigh University. When he was a PH.D student he began to question the plausibility of Darwinian evolution. He

studies eventually led him to publish the book *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*.

In it he points out Charles Darwin's confession: "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down."

In 1859 when Darwin studied and wrote we knew relatively little about the make up of cells. Today we study molecular biology. Behe points out things we all learn about in biology class in Jr. High but that were completely unknown to Darwin. Things like cilia, bacterial flagella that are complex machines that have to be fully present in order for them to function.

Not only that, but today we know these amazing biological systems are not simple. Their complexity far exceeds any human technology.

Behe says, "My conclusion can be summed up in a single word: design. I say that based on science. Irreducibly complex systems are evidence of a purposeful, intentional design by an intelligent agent."

Do you want God to show you His glory? Look around. Where does our consciousness come from? Our awareness?

You don't get something from nothing. J.P Moreland, who's a professor of philosophy with a Ph. D from University of Southern California asks: If the universe began with dead matter having no conscious how then, do you get something totally different - consciousness, living, thinking, feeling, believing creatures - from materials that don't have that. On the other hand, if everything started with the mind of God we don't have a problem explaining the origin of the mind."

Want to see God's glory. Look at the birth of a child, a mother's love, the way we pull out all the stops to save a human life. Look at the wonder and complexity of creation.

Nanoscientist James Tour of Rice University said: "Only a rookie who knows nothing about science would say that science takes away from faith. If you really study science, it will bring you closer to God."

Moses was blessed, but he didn't have anything up on us when it came to God's glory.

All of us get to those places in our life where we need that extra assurance that God is real. And because God is real we know that there's something more than just this life.

The Bible says beyond physical life there's a heaven and a hell. Our consciousness doesn't end at the end of our physical life.

Heaven is about experiencing the glory of God in all its fullness. Hell is separation from your Creator.

God's gift to us is forgiveness for all we've done wrong through His Son Jesus Christ.

The man Job said in the Bible: *I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold...*

Because God's Son died to pay for our sin and rose again we can be confident that we'll be resurrected to stand before God's presence.

Jesus said, *"He that believes on me has everlasting life."*