

Adult Bible Class

For Adults Ages 18 and Up



No man
cometh unto
the **FATHER**
but by
ME

John 14:6

Winter Quarter

December | January | February
2025-26

Adult Bible Class

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Editor in Chief: James M. Leonard, Ph.D.
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Edited and published quarterly by
LIFESTONE MINISTRIES
UNION GOSPEL PRESS
Rev. W. B. Musselman, Founder

ISBN 978-1-64495-768-4

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The Holy God and His Holy Children

BY GLENN WEAVER

One of God's most distinguishable attributes is His holiness. He is completely removed from sin and its tainted presence. He seeks for His creation to partake of His holiness, and He wants His children's sins to be purged so that they can enter His holy presence. Throughout this quarter, we will discuss various aspects of God's holiness and how they relate to the lives of His children.

In the first unit, we will investigate God's holy presence. The subject of our first lesson is Moses' request to see God's glory (Ex. 33:12-23), which God fulfilled only to the extent Moses could withstand. Later, God revealed His glory by appearing in the tabernacle (40:1-11, 34-38).

Lessons 3 and 4 expound familiar passages from the book of Isaiah. For Christmas, we look at a marvelous prophecy of the birth of a child who would lead the nation in God's righteousness (9:1-7). The following week offers a glimpse of God's incomparable greatness in Isaiah 40:21-31.

Lesson 5 begins our second unit, where we peek into God's holy house. We begin with Jesus in the temple as He cleansed it from hindrances to people's worship of our holy God (John 2:13-17). In lesson 6, we return to the days of King David, observing his delivery of the ark of God into Jerusalem. At that time, David commissioned an astounding psalm of worship and thanksgiving (1 Chr. 16:23-33).

Isaiah's view of God sitting on His throne in all His splendor is the subject



of lesson 7 (Isa. 6:1-13). God gave Isaiah a commission to preach to the people. He told Isaiah, however, that they would not listen to his words. Then, in lesson 8, we turn to Psalm 113:1-9 to praise God, who looks down from the heavens to provide care for the people He created.

Unit 3 looks at God's holy expectation. Lesson 9 covers Solomon's prayer of dedication at the completion of the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kgs. 8:22-30). In lesson 10, we look at God's instructions in Leviticus 19 to imitate His holiness.

Instructions for holy living are not restricted to the Old Testament. Lesson 11 looks at the New Testament's repetition of the command for God's people, both Jew and Gentile, to live holy lives (1 Pet. 1:14-17). We complete this quarter with the exhortation to run toward holiness from Hebrews 12:1-17.

Holy living is not always easy. But we can run the race and finish strong with the strength that Christ supplies!

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

EX. 33:12 And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.

13 Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation *is thy people*.

14 And he said, My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest.

15 And he said unto him, If thy presence go not *with me*, carry us not up hence.

16 For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? *is it* not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that *are* upon the face of the earth.

17 And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also

that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

20 And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

21 And the LORD said, Behold, *there is a place by me*, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:

22 And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:

23 And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

NOTES

The Glory of the Lord

Lesson Text: Exodus 33:12-23

Related Scriptures: Exodus 19:7-25; 33:1-11; 34:29-35;
2 Corinthians 3:7-18; Psalm 103:6-14

TIME: 1446 B.C.

PLACE: Mount Sinai

GOLDEN TEXT—"And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Exodus 33:20).

Lesson Exposition

ASTONISHING REQUEST #1— Ex. 33:12-13

Moses was about to probe into the very heart of who God is. He needed the assurance that the Lord was truly the kind of God who could pardon sin and take Israel as His inheritance, even though Israel was a stiff-necked and idolatrous nation (cf. 34:9). Everything was riding on God's character. So, in the first of his bold requests, Moses prayed that the Lord would make His ways known to him if he had really found favor in His sight (33:13).

Moses was pleading to know the hidden intents and purposes of the Lord for His people. It was unclear to Moses how God's glorious plan for His people could come to fruition if their sin would only provoke His wrath and judgment upon them. The Lord had indeed bound Himself to His people, but Moses did not see how that would end in anything but disaster in light of Israel's sin.

ASTONISHING REQUEST #2— Ex. 33:14-16

Moses knew there was no point in Israel going anywhere if the Lord did not go up with them. Although the Lord agreed to accompany Moses (vs. 14),

Moses pressed Him to make the same promise for all the people of Israel, not just for him personally. Moses understood that if God's presence did not go with them, Israel would be just like any other nation, and their entire mission would be futile.

Moses was holding out for something unspeakable. This was his second astonishing request: that a holy God would have so much mercy upon a stiff-necked people that He would go up with them to the Promised Land and thereby make them distinct among all the peoples of the earth (vs. 16).

ASTONISHING REQUEST #3— Ex. 33:17-19

God agreed to extend His grace to His stiff-necked people. He went on to tell Moses that he had found favor in His sight and that the Lord knew him by name. That drove Moses to inquire ever more deeply into the nature of such a God who is lofty and exalted but also willing to show such favor to undeserving sinners.

Moses' request to see God's glory (Ex. 33:17-18). The only thing left for Moses was to look into the depths of God's goodness for the assurance

that His promise could really happen for such a wicked people. He needed to know what about God's own nature made His promise even possible.

Like a person who stares into the heart of the sun or gets security clearance to a top-secret meeting, Moses desired the loftiest thing of all—to see the glory of the Lord Himself (vs. 18)! This was his most astonishing request yet.

But what exactly did Moses want to see? Certainly, he was not merely asking for a special, mystical experience. Neither was he asking to see a physical manifestation of God, because that would not be God's essence. Rather, Moses sought a deeper understanding of the nature and essence of God. In asking to see the Lord's glory, he meant something like: "Let me have a glimpse into Your divine nature. Let me see the meaning of Your great name. Show me the foundation of this amazing promise. Give me some assurance that You will indeed grant Your saving presence to this stiff-necked people!"

Next, we must understand another level of Moses' appeal, namely, the meaning of "glory." What is the "glory of God" that Moses desired to see? Many may be aware that the Hebrew word for "glory" carries the idea of weightiness. When applied to a person, it describes a person of gravity, weight, and significance. When applied to God, glory describes all that He is that makes Him infinitely significant.

God's response to Moses' request one chapter later gives further insight. At the very moment when the Lord showed Moses His glory, He proclaimed His attributes, describing Himself as compassionate, gracious, slow to become angry, full of faithfulness and truth, and forgiving (34:6-7). God's glory, then, is a summary way to describe the infinite worth and beauty of God because of the innumerable attributes that make Him who He is.

The Lord's response (Ex. 33:19).

The Lord affirmed Moses' request by promising to cause all His goodness to pass before Moses and to proclaim His name as He did so. Here it is important to see the theology unfolding in God's reply. Moses asked to see the Lord's glory, and in response, the Lord affirmed that He would show His goodness and proclaim His name. Thus, God's glory, goodness, and name are parallel and complementary (cf. Isa. 48:9-11). That tells us two things.

First, the parallel between God's glory and goodness tells us that at the heart of God's essence is His moral beauty and perfection that always and only does what is best for His creatures. That inherent truth about God would provide Moses the assurance and hope that He sought.

Second, in the ancient context, a name was more than someone's self-designation. It was seen as something that revealed who that person was. Therefore, the parallel between God's glory and name indicates that God was going to reveal to Moses something essential to who He is.

Upon Moses' request, the Lord proclaimed, in concentrated form, His glory, goodness, and name. He told Moses, "I . . . will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy" (Ex. 33:19). Although God would add more detail in chapter 34, this statement *is* the glory of the Lord. What the Lord revealed here about Himself explains how and why He could dwell among such sinful, rebellious people without causing their extermination.

The Lord made known to Moses that His bestowal of grace and compassion on unworthy sinners proceeds from the very nature of His glory. As God's expanded statement in 34:6-7 indicates, God is also glorified by His wrath upon the unrepentant, but even there the emphasis is

on God's proclivity toward grace and compassion. His wrath only lasts a few generations, but His mercy lasts for a thousand generations.

Three components of God's compassion can help us understand how it brings glory to His name.

First, God's extension of grace and compassion to sinners is unconditional. There are no previous conditions that unworthy sinners have to meet to somehow merit the mercy, compassion, or grace they so badly need. By Moses' own admission, Israel was a stubborn and stiff-necked people (vs. 9). And yet God offered them mercy.

Second, God's bestowal of grace and compassion upon sinners is always a free gift. God's grace toward sinners is not the result of a bargain or negotiation between two parties; rather, God offers it of His own free will (33:19).

Third, God's lavish bestowal of grace and compassion is relational. The Lord does not merely wish for earthly agents to do His bidding. He wants people to love Him and delight in His ways. The Lord's compassion and mercy are a means to bring reconciliation between Him and a sinful people so that He may dwell among them and they may find in Him their deepest delight.

INHERENT LIMITATIONS FOR MOSES—Ex. 33:20-23

God used anthropomorphic language in verses 20-23 to describe how He would reveal Himself to Moses. We know that God is spirit and thus does not have a physical body (cf. John 4:24), so He was obviously not talking about a physical "face," "hand," or "back."

By declaring that His "face" is a deadly sight to humans, God emphasized His holiness in contrast to human frailty. He seemed to indicate not merely that *sinners* cannot see Him and live but that *the human race* cannot see Him and live.

Confusingly to modern readers, just a few verses earlier, Moses is said to

have spoken with God "face to face" (Ex. 33:11). There is no contradiction, though, because as the rest of the verse indicates, the phrase "face to face" was an idiom meaning that Moses spoke with God as one would speak with a friend—not at a distance but up close and unhindered. The anthropomorphic reference to God's "face" is simply used in two different ways in chapter 33.

In summary, the Lord revealed that His very nature leads Him to have compassion. That was Moses' great confidence, and it remains the great hope for undeserving sinners today.

—Jerod A. Gilcher

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Moses ask the Lord to make His ways known to him?
2. Why did Moses not want Israel to enter the Promised Land without God's presence going with them?
3. Why did Moses need to know something about God's nature?
4. What was Moses' most astonishing request?
5. What is God's glory?
6. How did God promise to grant Moses' final request?
7. What is the relationship between God's "glory," "goodness," and "name"?
8. Which of His attributes did God emphasize when describing His glory to Moses?
9. How does God's compassion bring Him glory?
10. What does God's warning about seeing His face in Exodus 33:20 teach us about the relationship between God and humans?

—Matthew Robinson

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. We need a mediator to stand in the breach and reconcile us to God (Ex. 33:12-13; cf. Ps. 106:23).
2. God's presence gives the church its worth and significance (Ex. 33:14-16; cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-17).
3. The indwelling Holy Spirit assures us that we are chosen children of God (Ex. 33:16; cf. Rom. 8:16).
4. We find favor in God's sight because our Mediator, Jesus Christ, has found favor in His sight (Ex. 33:17; cf. Rom. 5:2).
5. God wants us to make bold requests of Him (Ex. 33:18).
6. There will always be more to learn about our glorious God (vss. 19-23).

—Matthew Robinson

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. How would you define God's glory? How does Exodus 33:12-23 change your understanding of God's glory?
2. Why is studying the character of God relevant for daily life? How can knowing more of God's character help you grow in godliness?
3. Think of some common struggles you regularly face in your life (such as fear, anger, laziness, or lust). For each struggle, which attribute of God acts as the best remedy? For instance, how does the sovereignty of God serve as a cure for fear? How does the love of God serve as a cure for selfishness?
4. If you could get to heaven and forever enjoy all its eternal blessings, but God were not there, could you still be happy? Why or why not?

—Jerod A. Gilcher

Golden Text Illuminated

"And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Exodus 33:20).

We learn from this verse that our finite human vision is incapable of fully perceiving the grandeur and splendor of God's glory.

While we may be unable to see God's face, His glory is pervasive and evident throughout creation. In Exodus 33:18, Moses pleaded to see God's glory. In His response, God granted Moses a glimpse of His goodness by allowing him to see His back, revealing a fraction of His glory. That encounter illustrates that while God's full glory remains unseen by human eyes, He graciously reveals aspects of His splendor to those who seek Him. This may occur even through His creation and other ways we sometimes fail to notice (cf. Ps. 19:1).

Exodus 33:20 calls us to approach the glory of the Lord with the utmost respect. We are invited to recognize God's incomparable majesty and holiness, acknowledging our limitations and submitting to His greatness. In the presence of His glory, we are compelled to fall on our knees in humility and worship, recognizing the vast chasm between the divine and the human.

Even without fully beholding God's face, we can still experience the transformative power of His glory (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18). We are blessed to experience glimpses of His glory (just as Moses did), and we anticipate the day when our faith is realized. In the meantime, let us strive to live in the radiance of His glory, constantly transformed into His likeness and reflecting His magnificence to a world in need of His light.

—Page Brooks