

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

John 14:6

SENIOR HIGH BIBLE TEACHER
FOR TEACHERS OF TEENS AGES 15-17

WINTER QUARTER | DECEMBER | JANUARY | FEBRUARY 2025-26

Senior High Bible Teacher

WINTER QUARTER

December 2025, January, February 2026

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God, the Holy One

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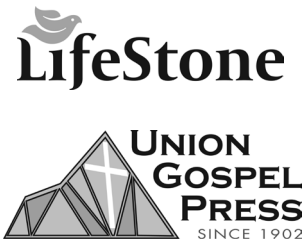
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Editor in Chief: James M. Leonard, Ph.D.
Managing Editor: Michelle Birtasevic
Writer: Allyson Nance
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The Weeks Ahead

Our journey into looking at the holiness of God begins in Exodus 33, where we see that Moses requested to see God's glory. Although God did reveal a glimpse of His divine nature to Moses, a direct encounter with God's holiness would have rightfully destroyed him. However, God desired to reveal His glory to His people. He instructed Moses in the latter part of Exodus to build a tabernacle where His presence would dwell and shine forth among the people.

In lesson 2, covering Exodus 40, God descended on the tabernacle in a cloud that both revealed and hid His glory. The cloud allowed people to see that He was there without revealing the full force of His holiness. Moses could not enter the tabernacle to encounter God's glory, because he, like the other Israelites, remained a corrupt human. We must learn more about how to approach God's presence before we return to Moses.

In lessons 3 and 4, we turn to the prophet Isaiah and his encounters with God. In Isaiah 9, he proclaimed the birth of a special son. The hope of the nation was that this son would be their salvation from ruin. Although the baby born in Isaiah's time did not perfectly fulfill this hope, we know that Jesus did come as the promised Son to provide salvation for the nations. In chapter 40, we see that even though the people's sin led to exile, God would not abandon them. The revelation of His sovereignty shows us that He has a perfect plan, even when we do not see it.

Lesson 5 focuses on Jesus' cleansing of the temple. This event shows

us that God intended His dwelling place to be holy, not degraded by distracting market transactions. Lesson 6 shows us David's prayer, in which he praised God for His presence with His people in Jerusalem.

Lesson 7 moves back to Isaiah as we study his vision of God's throne room in His heavenly dwelling. We, along with Isaiah, fall down in worship before God. Isaiah revered God's glorious presence and praised Him for His promise of a seed despite the apostasy of the nation of Israel. Lesson 8 also pictures God's throne room, and we celebrate with the ancient Israelites His glory and holiness.

Lessons 9 and 10 round out our study of ancient Israel and God's holiness. First, Solomon dedicated the temple to God, praying that His presence would be poured out upon it. Solomon noted that God's presence could not be contained by any earthly or heavenly place. Then we return to Moses and God's instructions for Israel to enjoy His presence. This lesson clearly links God's holiness to His love and shows us that our reflection of God should manifest itself in love for our neighbors.

Lessons 11 and 12 move to the New Testament people of God. We will study two early Christian teachers who instructed the redeemed people of God how to walk with the Holy Spirit in holiness. Peter emphasized the command for holiness that should characterize Christians. Then the author of Hebrews provided the picture of a race where Christians run toward Jesus and His holiness as they seek the presence of God.

PLEASE NOTE: Fundamental, sound doctrine is the objective of LifeStone Ministries, Union Gospel Press. The writers are prayerfully selected for their Bible knowledge and willingness to submit to the Spirit of Truth, each writing in his own style as enlightened by the Holy Spirit. At best we know in part only. "They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

The Scriptures reveal God's words to us; they help us know Him, they light our paths, and they teach us how to reflect Him in all that we do. Even though Timothy had followed God from a young age, and his mother and grandmother showed him examples of faith (2 Tim. 1:5), Paul still urged him to rightly explain the Word (2:15) since God's words have utmost importance to the life of believers (1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). When we come to the Scriptures, especially as teachers, we must be careful to do due diligence in study, listen to the Holy Spirit, and live out what we teach as an example of holiness (Jas. 3:1).

These three tips will be helpful in your journey to interpret the Scriptures accurately and teach them effectively. First, we must recognize the significance of the Holy Spirit surrounding the entire process of writing and reading the Word of God. The Holy Spirit inspired the Word of God to be written (2 Tim. 3:16-17). He also illuminates the Word for Christians (John 14:26). The twin doctrines of inspiration and illumination remind us that we cannot approach God's Word under our own power and expect to adequately grasp its meaning. Every interpretation of the Bible should be undergirded with prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit.

Second, we believe in the historical truth of Christianity—that Jesus actually lived a perfect life on earth, died on the cross, and rose from the dead. Along with that, we believe that God revealed His Word to real people in real situations. The Bible did not just descend from heaven; rather, the Holy

Spirit worked in specific humans to cause the Word of God to be written. Communication from God was thus linked to specific historical contexts as God revealed Himself to people in various historical situations.

As we turn to interpret God's Word, we must respect the people and situations that He chose to use. If we pull verses out of their literary context (not reading what comes before and after them), and if we ignore a Scripture's historical context (not considering who wrote it, when it was written, and what the people who received it were dealing with), then we risk missing what God intended us to learn from it.

One way to think about this is that God did not write the Bible *to* us. He certainly wrote it *for* us (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; 1 Pet. 1:10-12), but He caused it to be written to specific groups in specific times. Their context controls the meaning, or at least the primary meaning, that He intended. As we will see throughout these lessons, the human recipients of specific prophecies might not have always understood their entire fulfillment, but they still understood that God was working, and their context influences interpretation.

Take, for instance, Isaiah 6:13. When God had Isaiah speak concerning the "seed" that would remain after the exile, his audience in the southern kingdom of Judah did not know how God would bring that prophecy to fulfillment, but their context—what they understood words to mean at that point in history and how Isaiah framed the verse—helps us understand its meaning.

For narratives and instructional sections, the context of the people who received it is of utmost importance for interpretation. Here we must look for the principles behind each instruction to understand how best to apply it to today's society. For instance, to interpret Exodus 33:5, we must recognize that "ornaments" does not mean things we hang on a Christmas tree—even though we study this passage in December and that might be the meaning that most readily comes to mind. When we look at the Hebrew term behind "ornaments," we will quickly see that it basically means "jewelry." If we neglected to understand the context, we could get very confused!

The two types of context most important for interpretation are historical and literary. Historical context means the people, events, and languages surrounding the text in its original setting. Literary context means the text surrounding a particular passage or verse.

If we want to understand Isaiah 6:9, we cannot just read it by itself without looking at the entire chapter and the entire book of Isaiah to see what God intends. If we read only, "And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not," it will seem like God has totally rejected His people and no longer wants them to repent. However, if we zoom out to the chapter level, we will see that He has taken the initiative to call Isaiah, indicating that He still intends to communicate with His people. We also see the plan for a holy seed that will survive.

If we zoom out to read all of Isaiah, we see God's plan to rescue and redeem all the nations through His Servant and His intention to provide a beautiful new creation for restored humanity. Reading one verse out of

context can give us an incorrect idea of God's relationship with His people (and of who belongs to the people of God—a constantly emerging concept throughout Scripture).

Third, nearly all Scriptures collected in the Bible were written to communities, not individuals. If you read through letters such as Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 and 2 Peter, every "you" or "ye" that you come across is plural in the original text; only "thou" and "thee" are singular. Modern English does not distinguish between singular and plural except in the colloquial with words like "y'all" and "you guys." With the exception of the personal letters (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, 2 and 3 John), Scripture addresses a community of faith. Reading it with that in mind helps us remember the importance of God's people to our own Christian walk.

To summarize, we have a high calling as teachers of God's Word. He inspired, preserved, and illuminates His Word for us through His Spirit, and we should not take the privilege of communication with Him through His Word and prayer lightly. We have a responsibility to thoroughly search out the historically grounded messages, to consider their contexts, and to seek their meanings through communion with the Holy Spirit.

Finally, no understanding of the Word of God is complete without application. Although the meaning of God's Word stands unchanging, it has new significance and applications for us at every moment of life. We should continually seek to apply God's Word to our daily lives under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And as teachers, we can lead others to do the same.

(Continued on page 77)

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).

Studying the Text

A scientist approaches God with a challenge: “Modern people have come so far that we no longer need you, God. We can do anything you can do. To prove it, I challenge you to a people-making contest to show you that we are just as creative and powerful as you are.” God accepts the challenge, and they begin. God gathers some dirt from the ground, forms it into the shape of a man, and breathes life into it. Immediately the person hops up and begins to walk around. The scientist nods his head and says, “That’s great, but I can do it too!” He bends down and starts to gather some dirt as well. God immediately interrupts, “Get your own dirt!”

As the people of Israel saw in this passage, everything we have (even dirt!) comes from God. When we face the possible removal of His presence and glory from our lives, we realize how dependent we are on Him for both our tangible surroundings like the dirt we walk on and the air we breathe as well as the intangibles like love, goodness, and beauty. We are nothing without God.

THE PEOPLE OF GOD SEE CRISIS— Ex. 33:12-17

The book of Exodus records Israelite history from around 1446 B.C., when God heard the cries of His people enslaved in Egypt and sent Moses to rescue them, release them from enslavement, and renew their relationship with Him. Roughly the first half of the book (chaps. 1—18) covers God’s miraculous rescue through the plagues and the Red Sea crossing. The second half (chaps. 19—40) turns to the covenant relationship that God sought to establish with this newly rescued group of people at Mount Sinai.

God provided guidance and expectations for His people through the Ten Commandments (chap. 20) and other laws that give further explanation of those commandments (chaps. 21—24). Then He provided detailed instructions for a tent of meeting, the tabernacle, in which His presence resided within the Israelite community (chaps. 25—31). Just as Israel was called on to start fulfilling God’s beautiful covenant, they blew it badly. Exodus 32 records how quickly Israel broke the covenant. After forty days without seeing Moses, instead of worshipping

God, they created and worshipped a golden calf. This immediately broke the first two commandments God had given them (20:3-4). God was understandably displeased. He still intended to send them into the Promised Land with the guidance of an angel. However, He threatened to withhold His own presence from them (33:2).

Moses' first request (Ex. 33:12-13). Moses had originally balked at the job of serving as the Israelite intercessor and had refused God's instructions four times (3:11; 4:1, 10, 13). Now he embraced his role of intercessor to beg God not to abandon His people.

Names in the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) usually do more than merely distinguish between persons. Names of people often had meaning tied to their identity and were linked to their character and resultant actions. For instance, "Yahweh" (LORD) comes from the Hebrew verbal root "to be," thus implying existence and presence. Knowing someone "by name" indicated deep knowledge and relationship. Here Moses emphasized his relationship with God to give more weight to his intercession. In 33:13, he put his own relationship with God on the line. He asked God to give grace and remember His gracious choice of Israel and His relationship with them.

God's first answer (Ex. 33:14). God's reply was not altogether comforting. He did assure Moses that He would go into the land rather than delegate the task to an angel. But He responded with the singular second person pronoun "thee." This leads one to think that He was promising His divine presence would go with Moses only, not with the entire nation of Israel. Additionally, the idea of "rest" usually is seen when the Promised Land is mentioned. God indicated that Moses (singular "thee") would be given rest in the land. This put in doubt whether the

remainder of the people would experience that rest.

Moses' second request (Ex. 33:15-16). Moses continued his intercession, reiterating the plural pronouns to include the whole people of Israel in his request. He respectfully responded that grace could only come to God's people could through His presence with them. Although God still offered them the land, Moses knew this would not be sufficient. Receiving the land of milk and honey without the presence of God would be like receiving a beautifully decorated gingerbread cookie only to take a bite and find that it is made of cardboard. For Israel, identity rightly stemmed from their relationship with Yahweh. Cutting off that relationship would leave them nameless and without direction and an identity of their own.

Moses also indicated that the people's identity as belonging to God separated them from the other nations on earth (vs. 16). "Holiness" can be defined as "separateness." Moses clearly stated here that the people of Israel derived their status as a holy people directly from God. That status depended on being identified with Him. If He did not continue with them on their journey into the new land, they would lose their identity with all its attendant ramifications. Being the people of God required the presence of God, so if He left them, it would mean their end.

God's second answer (Ex. 33:17). Fortunately for the people of Israel, God relented. Again, "by name" is reiterated. God determined to continue His relationship with the people of Israel. This was partially because of His strong relationship with Moses, but as we see through His revelation of Himself and His attributes, it rested more strongly on His own mercy and compassion. God's name reveals a character that consists of being merci-

ful, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth (34:6).

MOSES SEES THE GLORY OF GOD— Ex. 33:18-23

Moses' third request (Ex. 33:18). Building on this rapport, Moses besought God for a further privilege: to see His glory. The Hebrew word *kabod*, translated "glory" in our English text, can mean "weightiness" or "reverence." Humans struggle to comprehend God's glory, even though God does sometimes reveal His glory to people, as seen in Leviticus 9:23. However, these revelations occur infrequently and hold great significance. Would God grant this third and very personal request of Moses?

God's third answer (Ex. 33:19). The Lord responded affirmatively. Here God spoke His personal name. The ancient Israelites used the consonants "YHWH" to inscribe God's personal name. Since Hebrew script originally lacked vowels, pronunciation is uncertain. Jews do not even speak the name when reading the text aloud, often replacing it with either "the Name" or "the Lord." In English, we represent our best guess at a pronunciation as "Yahweh," and some Bible translations note the occurrences as LORD (with small caps). God thus allowed His personal character to be seen in this revelation.

Interestingly, Yahweh replied to Moses' request to see His glory by allowing him to see His goodness, indicating a connection between these two qualities. Throughout the Old Testament, God's goodness is inextricably intertwined with His relationship with Israel and His covenant promises to them (Ps. 27:13; Jer. 31:12, 14; Hos. 3:5). We can see here God's renewal of His covenant promises to faithless Israel, just as He promised Moses. Yahweh revealed Himself and indicated that His name

should be understood in terms of His attributes. God's name links to His covenant love, His glory, and His holiness. It points to His reality.

God continued His response to Moses with an enigmatic statement about His mercy and compassion. Although Israel had given God no reason to continue His relationship with them, He remains faithful and forgiving. Although they had given their devotion to a golden calf in place of God, His mercy and compassion remain unchanging. No one deserves His mercy, and no one deserves His compassion. He gives them entirely as He sees fit.

God's revelation (Ex. 33:20-23). Yahweh promised to reveal His goodness and His name to Moses. However, God could not show him the entirety of His glory, since no one can see the Lord and live. Here God's "face" represents His complete presence, presumably including the entire weight of His glory, which no human can withstand.

So the Lord offered Moses this compromise: God would place Moses in the cleft of a rock while He passed by. The anthropomorphisms (descriptions of God using human terms) complicate this passage, but the important point remains. God prevented Moses from experiencing the entirety of His glory in order to protect him. Moses still experienced an incredible closeness to God, but even he could not survive an encounter with all Yahweh's glory and holiness.

Fanny Crosby, a blind Christian hymn writer, wrote a hymn based on this passage in 1890. Her hymn, titled "He Hideth My Soul," reads:

A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord,
a wonderful Savior to me;
He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock,
where rivers of pleasure I see.
He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock,
that shadows a dry, thirsty land;
He hideth my life in the depths of His love,
and covers me there with His hand,
and covers me there with His hand.

In this hymn, the highest note in the song tune occurs at the word “depths”—an intriguing paradox that reflects the mystery of this passage in Exodus. What the Israelites most needed was the presence of God, but the entirety of His presence would have destroyed them. However, just as the depth of God’s love reaches the highest height, so He solved the dilemma the Israelites faced by revealing exactly as much of His glory and holiness as they could handle, while continuing to act in goodness, mercy, and compassion toward them.

Imagine being lost in the Arctic in the midst of a bitterly cold winter. Fire would be an absolute necessity for your survival. However, fire always contains the threat of destruction and the potential for injury or death. You would need access to a carefully controlled fire to meet your needs while not being consumed.

That is the picture of God’s presence in this passage. The Israelites could not survive without Him, but His glory is an all-consuming fire that could swallow them up in an instant (24:17). Did they want God’s presence? Yes! Could they handle it? Definitely not. So God would continue to meet them where they were, reveal Himself as they were able to bear, and care for them through it all.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

M — God’s Glory at Sinai. Deut. 5:22-29.

T — Unable to Live in God’s Presence. Ex. 33:1-6.

W — Revive Us Again. Ps. 85:1-9.

T — Living in God’s Presence. Ps. 27:1-14.

F — God’s Glory Reflected. Ex. 34:29-35.

S — God’s Glory Unveiled. 2 Cor. 3:7-18.

S — Beholding God’s Glory. Ex. 33:12-23.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What did Israel do that caused God to be angry with them, as seen in Exodus 33:5?
2. What three requests did Moses present to God? Give the verse numbers and the requests.
3. What did God reveal to Moses (vs. 19)? Did He ultimately show Moses His glory?
4. Can people handle seeing the glory of God?
5. What are some ways to describe God’s glory as seen in this passage?

REAL-LIFE APPLICATIONS

Christians today need the presence of God in their lives just as much as the Israelites did. For those of us who have entered into the community of faith by a personal relationship with Jesus, the Holy Spirit provides that continual presence in our lives. Even when we do not deserve His forgiveness and goodness, He is there. We can call on His name at any time and know that His reality is as true for us as it was for them.

At times, we may not want God around if we are choosing sin. We may not feel His presence during hard times or trials. But even in those times, God’s presence dwells continually with us, and we have constant access to His glory (Heb. 4:14-16). Every moment of the day, we should consider whether we are acting like the Israelites. Are we worshipping a “golden calf,” allowing other priorities, temptations, or idols to usurp God’s place in our lives?

We must set aside time to analyze whether our lives reflect devotion to Him and celebration of His presence within us.

We should also recognize that we need to have a correct level of fear concerning the glory of God. God's glory should never be taken lightly. It should always be sought with sincerity and reverence. Have you taken God for granted or begun to treat Him casually or think of Him as an equal? This passage should draw you back to a place of respect and deference.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to show students that although God's glory is overwhelming to humans, it nevertheless points us toward His holiness and our need for His presence in our lives.

Planning Your Presentation

Before you plan your class time, take a few moments to praise God for His holiness and thank Him for His goodness in your life. Identify ways you have seen His goodness to you and your family recently.

To prepare for class, read Exodus 32 through 34. This portion details Israel's sin and its consequences. Review the travels and activities of the Israelites and the pertinent issues as summarized in "Studying the Text." You may want to consult a reliable study Bible or commentary for further information. A good Bible atlas can help you understand the route and terrain Israel traversed as well. As you understand the flow of the historical narrative, you can explain it to your class so that they see the dire straits Israel was in because of their sin.

To start the class, consider asking how many times during a normal day your students think about food. This conversation should be light-hearted and help them feel engaged and able to

open up and share. The comparison can easily be drawn between thinking about food, which sustains us physically, and thinking about God, who sustains us in every way. Recognize His presence with us as you introduce the lesson.

This lesson begins the series on God's holiness, so feel free to spend extra time considering Exodus 33:16. You can also emphasize the relationship between God's glory and His holiness. Understanding the weightiness of God's glory helps us understand why His holiness causes separation, both between God and people and between God's people and the nations.

Visual Aid

Fire sustains and protects those who need it by providing warmth and allowing food to be cooked. The presence of God, containing His holiness and glory, sustains us and protects us from evil forces. However, getting too close to a fire puts a person in immediate danger. We must have a "separateness" from God because of His holiness. This separation will finally be overcome when we spend eternity with God, but as long as we dwell on earth with its corruption, we must revere God's glory and respect His awesome holiness.

