



Studies in the Book of Exodus

Text
Exodus 34:1-35

Topic
When Moses speaks with God, his face
shines from having been in His presence

Title
"The Shining"

America's favorite dad, Homer Simpson, is the safety officer for the Springfield nuclear plant owned by Mr. Burns. It affords the writers lots of comic material. In one episode, Homer is standing behind an X-ray machine, and his insides are glowing green. The doctor tells Marge, "What you are seeing here is the radioactive dye flowing through your husbands circulatory system." Then the nurse comes into screen with a large needle and says, "But doctor, *I haven't injected the dye yet.*"

You may not glow green, but certain medical procedures will make you radioactive. My oldest brother is being treated for prostate cancer by having radioactive "seeds" placed directly in the prostate.

He told me that the doctor gave him a card to show at airports and other venues because he will emit enough radiation from the treatment to set-off alarms.

A lot of people are radioactive enough to trigger alarms for “dirty bombs.” One source said,

Nearly 60,000 people a day in the United States undergo treatment or tests that leave tiny amounts of radioactive material in their bodies, according to the Society of Nuclear Medicine. It is not enough to hurt them or anyone else, but it is enough to trigger radiation alarms for up to three months.

Not enough to hurt anyone else? That’s not always true. According to a study of patients treated with things radioactive,

About 7% of outpatients said they had gone directly to a hotel after their treatment, most of them with their doctors' knowledge. Hotel stays are a particular concern, since the patient can expose other guests and service workers. In 2007, an Illinois hotel was contaminated after linens from a patient's room were washed together with other bedding. The incident would probably have gone unreported but for nuclear plant workers who later stayed in the same hotel and set off radiation alarms when they reported to work.

Our story in Exodus took place before radiation alarms, but Moses *does* glow, and his ‘shining’ is at first quite alarming to the Israelites:

Exo 34:29 Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony *were* in Moses' hand

when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.

Exo 34:30 So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.

Centuries later, the apostle Paul would refer to this 'shining' to illustrate the superior blessings we enjoy in the church compared to Israel under the Old Covenant:

2Co 3:7 But if the ministry of death, written *and* engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away,

2Co 3:8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?

I'll organize my comments about this around two points: #1 Under The Old Covenant You Experienced An **Afterglow** Of God's Glory, and #2 Under The New Covenant, You Experience The **Always-Glow** Of God's Glory.

#1 Under The Old Covenant
You Experienced An Afterglow Of God's Glory

(v1-28)

For \$99 you can get a Radioactive Glow-in-the-Dark figure of Homer Simpson on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Hurry - only three left in stock.

I couldn't find a Moses figure - but there is a Jesus figure with glow-in-the-dark hands. It comes with five loaves and two fishes so you can replicate the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand.

Growing up sort of Catholic, I had a crucifix in my bedroom, with a glow-in-the-dark Jesus. It bothered me that Jesus' glow so quickly faded once the lights were off. I mean, shouldn't He glow all the time?

Let's see Moses get his glow on.

Exo 34:1 And the LORD said to Moses, "Cut two tablets of stone like the first *ones*, and I will write on *these* tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke.

Exo 34:2 So be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain.

Exo 34:3 And no man shall come up with you, and let no man be seen throughout all the mountain; let neither flocks nor herds feed before that mountain."

The original tablets of the Ten Commandments had been thrown-down and broken by Moses as he returned to the camp of Israel and found them worshipping a Golden Calf in a drunken orgy. After Moses interceded for them, and the Israelites repented, God determined to renew His covenant with them.

In Lamentations we read,

Lam 3:22 *Through* the LORD's mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.

Lam 3:23 *They are* new every morning; Great *is* Your
faithfulness.

Jeremiah wrote those words, and evidently he thought that we deserved to be “consumed... every morning.” But God is merciful, compassionate, and faithful. It isn’t low self-esteem to agree; it’s high God-esteem.

Exo 34:4 So he cut two tablets of stone like the first *ones*. Then Moses rose early in the morning and went up Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him; and he took in his hand the two tablets of stone.

No mention of Joshua accompanying Moses part way; not this time. The entire area was declared Off Limits to man and beast. That’s because this trip, God was going to reveal His glory to Moses.

Exo 34:5 Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

The “cloud” was the way God had been manifesting Himself to Israel - a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. In the last chapter, Moses had requested to see God’s glory - to see something more than just the cloud. God would accommodate Moses as much as He could during this visit.

Exo 34:6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,
Exo 34:7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

Last chapter God explained to Moses that he could not see His full glory and live. God said He would put Moses in the cleft of a rock, and cover his eyes as He passed by. Moses could get a glimpse of God's "back," and we said that the word for "back" means *afterward* or *afterglow*.

God is "merciful," not giving us what we deserve. He is "gracious," giving us what we don't deserve. His "longsuffering" is not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to eternal life.

"Abounding in goodness and truth" reminds me of His promise that all things will work together for the good.

"Keeping mercy for thousands" means for thousands of generations. God makes Himself available to all, and at all times.

"Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*," should be read as one thought. "Clearing the guilty" can be translated, "and no person is innocent by or of himself before" God. In other words, God takes the initiative to save, and He does it through grace, "forgiving" sinners on the basis of His own atoning sacrifice.

Don't let "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation" throw you. We read this before in Exodus, and when we did it ended, "of those who hate Him" (20:5). If you hate Him, i.e., disobey Him, this will affect the generations that follow.

Exo 34:8 So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped.

Exo 34:9 Then he said, "If now I have found grace in Your sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us, even though we *are* a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance."

Exo 34:10 And He said: "Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among whom you *are* shall see the work of the LORD. For it *is* an awesome thing that I will do with you.

The folks over at the MCU - the Marvel Cinematic Universe - claim that Captain Marvel is going to be by far their most 'super' super-hero. God is the original doer of "marvels," and He did and does them for Israel.

I submit that the entire history of the Jewish people is an on-going marvel of history that nothing but the miraculous intervention of God can account for.

Exo 34:11 Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I am driving out from before you the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.

Exo 34:12 Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst.

Exo 34:13 But you shall destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and cut down their wooden images

Exo 34:14 (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God),

Exo 34:15 lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot with their gods and make sacrifice to their gods, and *one of them* invites you and you eat of his sacrifice,

Exo 34:16 and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods.

With the pagan religious objects removed, there would be less temptation to “worship any other god.” Making a treaty with idolaters would lead to involvement in their sacrificial communal meals. It would encourage intermarrying with their daughters - many of whom were spiritual and/or physical prostitutes to their gods.

Exo 34:17 "You shall make no molded gods for yourselves.

I've been pointing out in our studies that there were genuine demonic entities at work. The “molded” idols represented real principalities, powers and authorities - the rulers of the darkness of this world.

God next gave Moses Israel's annual calendar.

Exo 34:18 "The Feast of Unleavened Bread you shall keep. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, in the appointed time of the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt.

Exo 34:19 "All that open the womb *are* Mine, and every male firstborn among your livestock, *whether* ox or sheep.

Exo 34:20 But the firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb. And if you will not redeem *him*, then you shall break his neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. "And none shall appear before Me empty-handed.

Exo 34:21 "Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.

Exo 34:22 "And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end.

Exo 34:23 "Three times in the year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the LORD God of Israel.

Exo 34:24 For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.

Exo 34:25 "You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven, nor shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover be left until morning.

Exo 34:26 "The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk."

If you're new to our studies in Exodus, you're going to feel a little disappointed by our lack of commentary today on these verses. We've already discussed these feasts; and especially the Sabbath and why we as Gentiles are not, and never were, obligated to keep it.

I will pause to comment on the young goat in its mother's milk - but only to say that NO ONE knows why God required this. Every answer is pure speculation. Keep in mind that some requirements were to give Israelite an opportunity to appear separate, and to be able to share with others the ways of the Lord.

Exo 34:27 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel."

Exo 34:28 So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

Don't we read elsewhere it was God's finger that wrote the Ten Commandments? Is this a contradiction?

No. God Himself wrote the Ten Commandments. The words that God instructed Moses to write were "these words," which He spoke in the preceding verses. Remember, God gave Moses lots of information, e.g., the plans for the Tabernacle and its service. The rewriting of the Ten Commandments on the newly prepared slabs was done by God's own hand.

A forty-day fast is possible - but not "without water." This was miraculous, for Moses to say, "man does not live by bread and water alone."

Exo 34:29 Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.

It was the first recorded afterglow. "Afterglow" is the name commonly given to a time after the regular church service ends, when believers stick-around to get 'deeper' into worship. In Charismatic and Pentecostal churches, it is a time when the exercise of certain gifts of the Spirit is encouraged.

We've done that; but right now we're doing something more like a mid-glow, as we encourage prayer and prophecy mid-service on Wednesday night.

Get that out of your mind for now, because Moses' afterglow was nothing like that. What we mean to emphasize here is that the giving of the Law, and what we know as the Old Covenant, was so glorious that it left him glowing.

Yes, we will see in a moment that our New Covenant, in the church age, is superior in every way. But if you were back in the day, you'd be blessed beyond measure to participate in the Tabernacle, the Feasts, and the Sabbath.

Israel was a privileged people indeed. The apostle Paul said of Israel,

Rom 9:4 ... to whom *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service *of God*, and the promises;

Rom 9:5 of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God. Amen.

We so often think of them only as failing, and falling short, that forget their blessings.

You know who else falls short, and fails? Read almost any New Testament letter and you'll see it is correcting some error. The letters Jesus dictated to the seven churches in the Revelation are largely corrective.

Let's therefore make a couple of observations from our verses:

First, we said that Israel was to completely avoid the idolatrous practices of the Canaanites, and to not intermarry with them. In their own way, they were to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world.

So are we. We are to be in the world to affect it for Jesus. Are we instead being affected by it - detrimentally? Each of us must answer that for ourselves. But we first have to ask it of ourselves.

If you intend to ask it of yourself, this quote from A.W. Tozer might help:

The Christian is called to separation from the world, but we must be sure we know what we mean (or more important, what God means) by the world. We are likely to make it mean something external only and thus miss its real meaning. The theater, cards, liquor, gambling: these are not the world; they are merely an external manifestation of the world. Our warfare is not against mere worldly ways, but against the spirit of the world.

Second, even though it is Old Covenant, it's hard to improve on God's proclamation of His characteristics: "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

Is that how you experience God? Is there one or more of those that you cannot reconcile to your circumstances? Then seek Him.

#2 Under The New Covenant You Experience The Always-Glow Of God's Glory

(v29-35)

I made-up a word: "Always-glow." Moses' face faded over time - like my Jesus crucifix. But Paul says we grow in glow as we walk with the Lord.

Exo 34:29 Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony *were* in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.

This was a very different descent than the first one. The tablets were intact; the Israelites had waited patiently; and all would be rewarded by a reminder of the glory of God.

Exo 34:30 So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.

The verb for “shone” is related to the noun for “horn.” The Latin Vulgate translation of Exodus confused these two, which thus led to the representation in European medieval art of Moses having two horns.

We sometimes joke about people glowing who have been exposed to radiation. But if you ever saw a person actually glowing - I think it would freak you out.

Exo 34:31 Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses talked with them.

Seeing Moses glowing, they skedaddled out of there. It was only when Moses called out to them that they started to realize this was a God-thing.

Exo 34:32 Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai.

Moses gave them a debriefing, bringing them up to speed on the plans to build the Tabernacle and such.

Exo 34:33 And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

Exo 34:34 But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded.

Exo 34:35 And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.

Whenever Moses spoke with God, he took the veil off and kept it off until he had finished telling the people what God had said. When Moses finished speaking to the Israelites, he put a veil over his face.

This odd procedure was an illustration whose meaning would not be revealed until centuries later. As I indicated at the beginning of our study, the apostle Paul wrote,

2Co 3:13 ... Moses... put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.

2Co 3:14 But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ.

2Co 3:15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.

2Co 3:16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

The veil told the Israelites that, glorious as it was, the covenant God made with them would fade, giving way to the New Covenant.

As glorious as the Old Covenant was for Israel, it was only temporary. It would give way to the New Covenant when Jesus came to give His life as the final sacrificial Lamb.

We've seen in previous studies how the Tabernacle, and its furnishings, and its sacrifices, all prefigure Jesus. It was temporary; He is permanent. It was a shadow; He is the Substance.

Instead of God's Laws being written merely on stones, they would be written on the hearts of believers who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul then makes this remarkable statement:

2Co 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

As a believer who is in Christ looks into the mirror of God's word, he or she sees "the glory of the Lord" Jesus as it is revealed there. The indwelling "Spirit of the Lord" utilizes the Word to transform us day-by-day to be more like Jesus. Instead of a fading glory, ours is a growing in glory.

I had a 'face' experience one time. It was soon after I had gotten saved. I was exiting a building - St. Bernardine's Hospital in San Bernardino, I think - when an acquaintance, Rick Lazar, was entering.

We stopped, shared a few pleasantries, then Rick said I looked different - happier somehow. I was able to share the Lord with him.

That glory has faded, apparently, because now people tell me I always look angry. But it showed me it's still possible to glow for God.

Theologically speaking, we are no longer people who experience the fading afterglow. We experience the always-glow as He Who began His good work in us has promised to complete it.

We experience it by "beholding" Jesus in the "mirror." We become like the image we see in the mirror. Thus it is essential we see Jesus as He truly is - "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

Let's keep glowing.