

covenant, symbolised by Moses' veil, led to fear, and did nothing to remove spiritual blindness.

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. "The Lord is the Spirit" – Yahweh of the OT is not just Father and Son but Spirit also.

"Lord is the Spirit" (who gives life) – link this statement with what Paul said earlier at the end of 2 Cor. 3:6, "the Spirit gives life". Turning to Jesus and receiving Him as your Lord is life-giving, and the only way to avoid heading for death by receiving grace.

18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

"Are being transformed" – a verse underlining how the Holy Spirit's sanctification is a process, not just

IN PRACTICE Moses, hidden in a cleft of the rock of the mountain top while God passes by, and the heavenly trio, dazzlingly bright with the spiritual energy of God's glory, are arresting and in the true sense of the word, awesome images. Paul's succinct teaching on the matter is that we, too, are being transformed by the Lord who is the Spirit, but for us it is not an experience in a moment in time, but the Holy Spirit's transforming, ongoing renewal from within. God's glory appearing on the mountain has become God's glory as the light of the regenerated life, free from the old constraints, within the believer. Looking back, the old covenant is about the reality of God being dulled, like trying to see what the weather is like through a curtain. The new covenant draws back the curtain and opens the window to the warmth of the sunlight. Previously God was known by proxy through priests and their practices and the complexities of a religious system. But now we are not under law! Where the Spirit of the Lord is operating there is freedom – to know God and grow in God, as much as we desire. Through the pages of the Bible, from the Garden of Eden in Genesis to the New Jerusalem in Revelation, God simply wants us to know Him, and choose to look to Him, and trust Him. We find this humanly impossible. The key is to find a different entrance, through trusting Jesus as the gate.

QUESTION *How free, and how desiring, are we to know God more and more and experience the glory of God within?*

PRAYER Lord, give me a fresh vision of You and of Your glory – but not just me. The bit of the world that I know and live in desperately needs to see who You really are. "Without vision, the people perish." Give us a fresh vision of You! Amen.

an event. Freed from the obscuring veil, we see the Father as He is, replacing the harsh, demanding image that the devil tries to impose, 2 Cor. 4:4.

4:1 Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.

"We have this ministry" – Paul recognises the privilege of being able to share the message of Good News, 1 Corinthians 15:9-11, 1 Tim. 1:12-17.

2 Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

"We do not use deception" – Unlike Corinth's false teachers, Paul sets out what is true, in a straightforward way. He has nothing to prove.

The Living Word

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The Bible readings for Sunday, March 3, 2019 with commentary notes

Revised Common Lectionary readings for **March 3** in Bible order

Prepare for Sunday by reading the Bible passages beforehand – read again to reflect on Sunday's teaching

Theme: **As we encounter God, His glory shines through us**

Exodus 34:29-35 – Moses leaves Mount Sinai radiant with God's glory

Luke 9:28-36 – The glory of God comes on Jesus in a dazzling display

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2 – How Moses' encounter with God is now given to us

Also: Psalm 99

Exodus 34:29-35 – Moses leaves Mount Sinai radiant with God's glory

After speaking to the people, Moses covers his face until he goes in to the Lord again

29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord.

"Face was radiant" – having asked to see God's glory, Exodus 33:18, he is unaware that he is temporarily reflecting that glory. This experience gave rise to the words of blessing in Numbers 6:24-26 and the refrain to Psalm 80:3,7,19."

30 When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him.

"They were afraid" – as they would be, and as when they heard God speak at Mount Sinai, Exodus 20:19. Yet, the glory of the Lord among them sanctifies both tabernacle and people, Exodus 29:43.

31 But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them.

32 Afterwards all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai.

33 When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face.

"A veil over his face" – to avoid unhelpful attention to the radiance fading until he went to enter the Lord's presence again.

34-35 But whenever he entered the Lord's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the Lord.

"Whenever he entered the Lord's presence" – Paul used these verses to explain the transitory glory of the old covenant which drew out the unbelief of the Israelites and so, in a sense, led to death – see Epistle reading.

"Removed the veil" – so reminding Israel that Moses' instruction came from the Lord. The veil hid the temporary nature of Moses' radiant face. Paul uses this to show that the old covenant was transient, unlike the new and enduring covenant in Jesus.

IN PRACTICE Having an 'up close and personal' encounter with Almighty God is a life-changing experience. The prelude to the 'coming down' part of the story is the 'going up' bit where Moses asks to see God's glory, Exodus 33:18, and is told that while he cannot see God's face and live, he can come close and be hidden in a cleft in the rock while God passes by. Perhaps this was in James' mind when he penned the words "Come near to God and He will come near to you," James 4:8. The point is, God is uncompromisingly holy but He still yearns for genuine relationship with us. After Egypt and years of abuse as slaves, that had to be learned: lots of rules and a relationship by proxy, through a religious framework. Only a few people like Moses really encountered God – and were profoundly changed as a result. Father God wants a simple, personal Father-child relationship of love and trust without dependence on priests and the scaffolding of religious expectations. Jesus has given us a better way to come into an intimacy that even Moses couldn't expect.

QUESTION How do you approach God? For example, "Almighty God" emphasises His majesty and power, while "Father God" expresses intimacy. How do you most readily see and experience God?

Luke 9:28-36 – The glory of God comes on Jesus in a dazzling display

Peter, John and James see Jesus in conversation with Moses and Elijah.

28 About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with Him and went up onto a mountain to pray.

"About eight days" – approximation, including parts of days as here, or (Mark) six full days.

"Up on to a mountain" – Jesus with His most trusted disciples, Peter, John and James, climbed a mountain, probably 9,000 ft Mount Hermon, near Caesarea Philippi, where Peter's confession of faith had just taken place, Luke 9:18-27.

29 As He was praying, the appearance of His face changed, and His clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.

"Appearance... changed... clothes became... bright" – how, exactly, we are not told but clearly a dazzling encounter.

• For further study – see similarities to Moses after he encountered God on Mount Sinai and John's vision of the Lord on Patmos, Exodus 34:29-35, Rev. 1:13-16.

30 Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus.

31 They spoke about His departure, which He was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem.

"Moses and Elijah... talking with Jesus" – the question "Who is this?" of Luke 8:25, 9:9 which had been answered by Peter in Luke 9:20 is now decisively confirmed by God Himself.

"His departure" – the word is exodos and links to Moses and the OT exodus and deliverance from Egypt. Jesus' crucifixion would be another 'exodus' and deliverance for all who would trust Him.

32 Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him.

33 As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, 'Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for You, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' (He did not know what he was saying.)

"Shelters" – a word also used in the Greek OT for the Tabernacle. Peter may have wanted to prolong this literal 'summit meeting' of the lawgiver, the renowned prophet and the Messiah. However Jesus had to complete His assignment on earth.

34 While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.

"A cloud" – indicative of God's presence and glory.

• For further study, the visible presence of God in Exod. 16:10; 24:15–16; 33:9–10 and Num. 9:15–23; and glory, 1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chron. 5:14; Ezek. 10:4

35 A voice came from the cloud, saying, 'This is My Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him.'

"Whom I have chosen" – literally "This is My Son,

the Chosen One" from Isaiah 42:1, identifying Jesus as the suffering servant of the Lord.

"Listen to Him" identifies Jesus as the prophet anticipated by Moses, Deut. 18:15

36 When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

"At that time" – Luke contrasts the former politically charged situation with the time following Pentecost when Peter, James and John spoke freely about this event e.g. 2 Peter 1:17.

IN PRACTICE What is it about the top of a mountain, Mount Sinai or Mount Hermon in these examples, that make them the place of choice to meet with God? The remoteness helps, and there's a different perspective -- the man-created world looks very small and insignificant, even from the top of Pen y Fan. Our 'mountain' may simply be a means to "be still and know that I AM God". We may not witness the events in this story, seeing Moses and Elijah in conversation with the Lord, but this tells us that the moves of our earthly lives are in parallel with activity in the heavenlies. That's why prayer is a vital precursor to change, because it recognises the reality of the spiritual realm. Sometimes we may be given a glimpse of that spiritual world, reminding us that the two worlds, the seen and the unseen, are not disconnected but moving together in an elaborate dance. The only way to make sense of such a complex picture is through knowing Jesus and His Spirit, who reveal what we cannot humanly grasp, and invite us to play our part.

QUESTION What is your big "Whatever is going on with..." question of the moment? If only Moses and Elijah could come and talk to us about it... Ask the Lord of heaven and earth what is being played out in the spiritual realm, and you'll have a good idea of how to pray.

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2 – How Moses' encounter with God is now ours

God's glory in us is ongoing in the life of the Spirit

12-13 Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away.

"What was passing away" – the order established at Mount Sinai would pass away, as God's glory in Moses' appearance faded. Knowing God personally through Jesus puts us in a two-way relationship – the new covenant – which is both 'unveiled' and enduring.

14 But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.

"The same veil remains" – the spiritual blindness which is removed when we trust Christ, v.16.

15 Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.

16 But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

"A veil covers... the veil is taken away" – the old