

The Glory of the Lord

DAVE BAST

What if you had a chance to see God? Would you grab it? Well, that is what Moses asks God for in Exodus 33; but God, we know from the Bible, is a spirit, a glorious spirit who, as the Bible says, dwells in unapproachable light and cannot be seen. No human being can actually see God as he is in himself; but what is Moses really asking? I think what he is asking God is, can I know you more deeply? Will you show me what you are really like? And that God is happy to do, as we will see. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast, and Scott, we have come to the end now of our series on Exodus; eight programs; and in our last program we looked at the story of the golden calf in Exodus 32; a really wonderful story – I mean, it is a terrible story, but wonderful truth, and we had fun exploring that. What we want to do, actually, is stay in Exodus 32 for just a little bit, because there is something that we touched on last time about Moses' role that I think deserves a little bit more teasing out.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The whole book seems to be answering the question: Who is Yahweh? This is the first book of the Bible...

DAVE BAST

Who is the true God? Who is the real God? What is he like?

SCOTT HOEZEE

He revealed his name in Exodus 3, so now he has a name. Pharaoh wanted to know who God was. Israel wanted to know who God was. Moses wants to know who God is; but Moses is also this fascinating go-between character. He is a champion for his people – a reluctant champion at times – but a champion for his people. He rescued the people from Egypt, and in the previous program we saw that God – because of that golden calf, God was ready to hit the abort button. He was going to destroy these people and start all over with just Moses, and Moses steps into the breach and says: No, no; don't. Remember your promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So, God relents. So, Moses is a mediating figure here as well, which is quite amazing when what you are mediating is between Almighty God and earth.

DAVE BAST

And his people. And frankly, we did not really draw this out last time, but maybe we should address it here and now. Exodus 32 is the kind of story that puts people off the Old Testament, and the God of the Old Testament; in fact, the God of the Bible. One of the ancient Christian heresies is called Marcionism from a second century teacher, Marcion, who said: No, that is not our God; that God of the Old Testament; the God who gets angry; he is mad all the time; he is smiting people. Here in Exodus 32, in fact, Moses rallies the Levites – his tribe – to his side and they go out and slaughter thousands of Israelites who have just been engaged in this orgiastic worship of Baal, thinking that they are worshiping God, but it is a fertility religion; and as fertility religions work, what you do is you mimic the activity that you want the god to do, which is to

give you children, give you crops, give you more animals and all the rest. So, there is this mass slaughter and it is one of those stories that make us sit up and say, “Whoa; he is not a tame God.”

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; but Moses’ role in all of this is so interesting, and sets up so much of what comes in the Bible. So, let’s just listen to a couple of verses from a little later in Exodus 32, starting at verse 30:

The next day, Moses said to the people, “You have committed a great sin, but now I will go up to the Lord, and perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”³¹ So Moses went back to the Lord and said, Oh, what a great sin these people have committed. They have made themselves gods of gold,³² but now please forgive their sin; but if not, then blot me out of the Book you have written.”

So, there is Moses going to bat for the people, and even putting his own life on the line.

DAVE BAST

And saying, maybe I can make atonement for them; what language that is! How could Moses possibly make atonement for the sin of Israel? Well, he couldn’t. All he could do was plead for God’s mercy and offer himself as a substitute. It reminds me of what Paul says in the New Testament when he is talking about his fellow Jews; his countrymen; again, Israelite according to the flesh: I could wish myself accursed for their sake because they have not come to Christ. Really powerful language that ought to give us pause the next time we are tempted to think or say, “Well, people do not really need to believe in Christ – they do not really need to come to Christ. They will be okay in the end.” Well, why would Paul then say, “I wish I would be cut off if only they could be included?” There must be something fundamental about that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and Moses, as I said a minute ago, goes to bat for the people here. He gets God to relent from his fierce anger; to give up on the plan B that God seems to have hinted at earlier that he would just start all over with Moses and re-create a mighty nation starting with Moses; and it all happens kind of quickly in Exodus 32. Moses says: Don’t. God says: Okay. But it is not simple. These are matters of cosmic moment and import. These are weighty, weighty matters of life and death; and to make atonement – it is clear that Moses is saying: Kill me then. If somebody has to die here, do me; blot me out eternally.

DAVE BAST

Which is a wonderful sentiment...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

It speaks well of Moses, but God knows that is not going to work because Moses is a sinner as well, so that will not do it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But it does point forward ultimately to the ultimate – we said that Moses is a mediator here; a go-between; and of course we know the book of Hebrews will make a great deal out of this later, and the New Testament generally makes it clear that Christ is the mediator. He bridges within himself God and humanity by being both divine and human himself...

DAVE BAST

Paul says that, in fact. There is one mediator between God and man; the man, Christ Jesus.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And even he is going to have to die to seal the deal. I think sometimes today we do have a tendency to maybe dismiss him a little too lightly, even in the church. Well, just forgive it; forgive and forget; which ultimately we do want to be forgiving in the church, and we want to proclaim and also embody the message of

forgiveness, but what we should never forget in the church – and this is what coming back to the Lord’s table is supposed to do for us as Christians – is that we never forget that our every act of forgiveness in the church of forgiving each other is a part of God’s forgiving of us, and that is not cheap.

DAVE BAST

Exactly; there is a price that must be paid and that will be paid; and the reason God can dismiss it so quickly is because he knows how it is all going to play out.

One of my predecessors at Words of Hope, as the radio minister, did a series of messages on the heart of Romans; Romans 5 through 8; and he entitled it *The Problem Only God Could Solve*; I love the title because that is getting at exactly what is going to happen that Exodus 32 is foreshadowing. It is pointing us forward, and that Romans will actually explain. The problem that only God could solve is, how can I be gracious and just at the same time? How can I show mercy to these sinful people who deserve death, and yet, how can I uphold my Law, which calls for death? And the answer is: By coming himself in the person of Jesus. So that, as Paul will say in Romans 3:26: He might be just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus. That is the great heart of the Gospel right there.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And there are a couple of more things to see before we finish this series of Exodus, and we want to see how the book ends ultimately before this program is out, and both of them have to do with the glory of the Lord; and we will look at that next.

Segment 2

DAVE BAST

I am Dave Bast, along with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and now finally, we are going to come to Exodus Chapter 33 and move forward to the end of the book, Exodus 40; but we want to pause to consider in Chapter 33 this wonderful scene where Moses asks to see God.

Scott Hoezee:

And it is less of a startling request on Moses’ part than it might look initially, because a little earlier in Exodus we were told – there was a verse that said that Moses and God had a very special relationship. They talked to each other like friends talk, face to face; and so, well, if Moses and God are that tight, if they are such good friends and they speak face to face, then Moses saying show me everything seems like a reasonable request, but it is not quite that simple. Even for Moses, it is not quite that simple.

DAVE BAST

Yes, but also, look at what has just happened. It also seems reasonable, not just because they have had a history in the past, but they have just been through this incredible crisis, and Moses has got to be feeling sort of euphoric because God has threatened to blot out all of Israel; God says: I will start over with you. Moses loves the people. He becomes the mediator – the go-between. God relents; and so, this is now the let down after an incredible moment of danger, and Moses sort of feels: Hey, God; we have been through something together; will You show me more now? Will you show me your face?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Let’s listen to this from Exodus 33; Moses has asked God: Be sure you go with us; be sure your presence goes with us; and God says; Yes, yes, yes, I will. But then in verse 18 of Exodus 33, then Moses said: Now show me your glory.

¹⁹And the Lord said, “I will cause all of my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” ²⁰But, he said, “You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”

²¹Then the Lord said, “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. ²²When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back, but my face must not be seen.”

DAVE BAST

Wow! This is another one of the greatest scenes of the Old Testament – really, of the Bible – and it makes me think of Gospel songs and old hymns: He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock; and Rock of Ages, cleft for me; but what really jumps out for me, as you just read that, Scott, is Moses says, “Show me your glory,” and God says, “I will make my goodness pass before you.” God’s glory – God’s greatest glory – is his goodness.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Is his goodness – his grace – his kindness.

DAVE BAST

I remember reading a good little book by Thomas Cahill called *The Gifts of the Jews*, and what Old Testament religion really has given the world is what he is talking about, and what it fundamentally gave the world was the knowledge that the high God of heaven – the true God – is a good God; because none of the gods of the ancient world were good.

SCOTT HOEZEE

No, not fundamentally.

DAVE BAST

They did not care about people. They entertained themselves and they played with people; they toyed with people. Just read the Greek and Roman myths; that is what they are all about; but the God of the Bible is good. That is his glory.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Glory in Hebrew is the word *kabowd*, and it is the same word for something that is heavy; something that has weightiness; something that has gravity, *gravitas*, we might say. It is all the seriousness and mighty power and awesomeness of God concentrated into one, and God is saying to Moses here: You could not take it if I gave you the whole thing; if I really, really came down on you with all that heaviness, you would get smushed; you would be squashed like a bug; but I am going to get pretty close to you. The one thing that I really like that he said was: As I pass by, I will proclaim my name: Yahweh; in your presence. I have always pictured this that at some point God, in the midst of this whirling revelation of God as it passes by Moses, and Moses hidden in the cleft of the rock, and at some point God speaks his own name. I just picture that as the loudest thing that anybody has ever heard on earth. Today we would say that it would shatter windows for miles because it would have such power when God speaks God’s own name.

DAVE BAST

Yes; it is kind of like the Big Bang in spiritual terms; but you know, there is this ambiguity in the Bible about can you see God, can you not see God? And you pointed out, Scott, earlier that Moses and God used to talk face to face...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, supposedly, yes.

DAVE BAST

But then you think of these other statements in scripture; John, for example, in John 1:18 says that no one has seen God or can see God, but the only Son who lives in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known. Or Paul writing to Timothy says: God dwells in unapproachable light. No one can see... Or you think of the visions of God: John in Revelation; Isaiah Chapter 6: They see a throne, but they do not exactly see God; so, part of what the Bible wants to tell us is that I think it is really talking about knowing God; not so much physically seeing, right?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and I think this also would – probably the logic of all of this would probably be behind that commandment that the people had just received not to make any images of God because how could you do it? There is so much glory, so much power, where would you start? Maybe the best image of God would just be a blank white canvas. It is just this almighty everything...

DAVE BAST

Actually, the best image of God is Jesus.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, now.

DAVE BAST

Yes; so, the reason we are forbidden to make images of God is because God will make his own image of himself.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DAVE BAST

And now we can see God because he has put on human flesh. That is one of the exciting things – the most exciting thing – about the incarnation, I think. God has made himself known.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That is the great thing, right? In John 14 when Philip at one point says to Jesus; they are in that room the night of Jesus' betrayal, the night before he dies, and Philip says, "Show us the Father," and Jesus looks at him and says, "Have I been with you so long and you still do not know me? If you have seen me, you have seen the Father," and I am guessing the disciples were rather dumbfounded that particular night and say: Really? We have seen you asleep in boats, and you have a piece of chive stuck in your incisors, and this is the Father?! And Jesus says: Yes, if you have seen me... So that is an amazing thing; John 1, again: We have seen his glory; the glory of God's one and only, and that is quite amazing; but, there is a final glory – revelation to be had at the very, very end of Exodus, and we will go to Chapter 40 next.

Segment 3

DAVE BAST

Hi; welcome back to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into Exodus, and the final chapters of the book of Exodus in this program. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee, and we are going to jump ahead now to the final chapter of Exodus – Exodus Chapter 40 – those of you who are familiar with Exodus know that after all the great drama of the golden calf and Moses as mediator in 32 and 33, the rest of Exodus is filled with all the laws Moses got while he was up on the mountain for 40 days – a lot of descriptions – a lot of instructions for how to build the tabernacle – but the book comes to its stunning conclusion in the 40th chapter, and we need to hear some of that.

DAVE BAST

Right; so, you get a little bogged down, frankly, in some of these chapters because God gives all the instructions to Moses for how to build this tabernacle, this big tent, which is going to be his sanctuary where he will be worshipped. So, first he goes through all the instructions to Moses on the mountain, then Moses comes down and repeats them all to the people, and then they show them carrying them out; so, over and over – okay, we get it. Lots of yarn and woven stuff and gold and copper and brass and poles and tents and goat hair and curtains and all the rest; but then finally we get to Chapter 40 and they set it up. So, we read the

tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month in the second year when Moses set up the tabernacle; so more months have passed, in other words. This took some time to do. Now they have been out there a year.

¹⁸When Moses set up the tabernacle, he put the bases in place, erected the frames, and... well, I will skip over all the details – the tablets and the ark...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Lots of furnishings...

DAVE BAST

And the bread, the lampstand...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Very, very elaborate.

DAVE BAST

And then finally, Scott, we get to the grand climax...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exodus 40 at the 34th verse: Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁵Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁶In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out, ³⁷but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out until the day it lifted. ³⁸So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day and the fire was in the cloud by night in the sight of all the Israelites during all their travels.

So, what we have here, Dave, is what did God want when he created the heavens and the earth? Go back to Genesis 1; he walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the Garden. There was fellowship between creator and creature, and that was obliterated by sin; a chasm opened up; they had to leave the Garden; but God's goal is to re-establish that fellowship; and here in Exodus 40, we go from emptiness to fullness; we go from the people in slavery in a foreign land to the very end of this. It is just a tent; it is not a grand temple – that will come later – but God has moved back into the neighborhood. God has moved back in with his people by virtue of letting his glory fill that tabernacle.

A friend of ours, Dave, is a preacher who always memorizes his scripture passages, and we assigned him, at a conference recently, Exodus 40, and he memorized the whole thing...

DAVE BAST

Unbelievable. I was there; I heard him say it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

He admitted it was one of the hardest things he ever memorized because there were so many details. Why so many details?

DAVE BAST

And so much repetition.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because this is actually kind of Genesis 1 rebooted. This is creation restarted as God moves back in with his people the way he was with Adam and Eve; the way he wants to be with us now, and now is ultimately with Jesus; and this points like an arrow straight to Jesus.

DAVE BAST

Oh, absolutely. Yes, the whole detail of the tabernacle and its furnishings is intended to convey one great message, and that message is: Though he is infinitely holy, he is also incredibly close; and a sinful people are able to experience the presence of God because he has made provision to forgive their sins; to atone for their sins. So, at the very heart of the tabernacle is the Holy of Holies, that inner tent, separated by a veil, by a curtain, and behind the curtain there is the Ark of the Covenant, which is a box covered with gold, surmounted by two cherubim – two angels – whose wings spread out to cover the Mercy Seat, as it is called in an inspired translation by William Tyndale, following Luther, incidentally, who called it the *gnadenstuhl* – the place of mercy...

SCOTT HOEZEE

The seat of grace.

DAVE BAST

And that is where God dwells; that is the point where the blood of the atoning sacrifice is applied, and it is all about Christ; Christ himself is the Mercy Seat. So, the tabernacle, and later the Temple, will be, as Tom Wright calls them repeatedly, the meeting place of heaven and earth. It is the intersecting point where heaven and earth are reconciled and where God comes down; and that ultimately is Jesus, because Jesus will say in John 2: Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up again.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We said, I think, early in this series, in one of the first episodes of this series on Exodus, we noted the words of the commentator, Terence Fretheim, who said that Exodus does not just follow Genesis in sequence in the Bible, Exodus is the sequel to the book of Genesis in the Bible, in which we get creation restarted, and that is what we have here. Ultimately, of course, the ultimate, ultimate new creation is going to come through Jesus, which is why there is that great verse: John 1:18. We all know John 1 – most of us know: In the beginning was the Word – but then there is that great thing: And the Word was made flesh and made his dwelling among us; but in the Greek, that word for *make his dwelling among us* is *skene*, which is the Greek word for *tent*, which is the word for tabernacle in Exodus 40. Jesus is the living tabernacle, so there is a direct line – you could take a Sharpie marker and put a direct line in your Bible from Exodus 40 to John 1; Jesus is the new tabernacle in whom all the glory of God dwells.

DAVE BAST

“We beheld his glory,” says John, “The glory as of the firstborn of the Father,” that is actually verse 14, John 1:14, but let’s just remind ourselves, too; what is the glory of God? “I will make my *goodness* pass before you.” So, yes, we see the cloud. Moses cannot even go inside the tent because the cloud is just too bright. You cannot dwell in an unmediated way with the Holy God of the universe; but just think of how mindboggling this is. This is the God who spoke and the universe came into being, and he is going to be a friend to sinful, puny little people like you and me, and it is all made possible through Jesus; so, that is his glory, really. It is not just the brightness of the cloud, but it is his goodness, his grace, his mercy and love in Jesus.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we have seen it, Dave, and we saw it in the earlier chapters, too, in Exodus 32 and 33, following the golden calf; that balance between God’s great justice and his great mercy. Sin has to be punished, but God is compassionate enough not to punish the sinners, and this is why in John 1, what is the glory of Jesus? Well, the fact that he is full of grace and truth; both; Jesus knows the truth about our sins, but he has the grace to forgive them, and that is the good news that is getting previewed already in Exodus 40.

DAVE BAST

Oh, it is good news, all right; and Exodus is a great book. We have had fun going through it, and we hope you enjoyed it, too.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thank you for joining our *Groundwork* conversation. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Dave Bast, and we would love to know how we can help you dig deeper into the scriptures. We have a website, groundworkonline.com; go there and you can communicate to us topics and passages you would like us to dig into next on *Groundwork*.

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/the-glory-of-the-lord>

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