

Study 4 - THE MANIFEST PRESENCE OF GOD

“Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exodus 15:11)

Introduction

God’s glory is the realm of eternity. It is infinite, boundless, with no restrictions – it is beyond the imagination of human beings. God’s manifested glory is eternity revealed on the earth. It is the impact of His powerful and unforgettable mark, seen and heard in the natural world. In the Old Testament, we see the glory of God manifested among the Israelites, and in the New Testament, we see His glory manifested among Jewish and Gentile believers in His Son Jesus Christ. God’s people experienced the manifestation of the glory in close proximity. It often appeared in the form of a cloud, known as the shekinah. Shekinah is a Hebrew word that refers to the “dwelling place of God” or “place where God rests”; it describes the eminent presence of God that transcends the spiritual realm and manifests in the physical world. Shekinah is related to the immediate and intimate activity of God – the splendour of the Lord while He is present in the now, in action, allowing others to know Him.

God will sometimes reveal His Shekinah glory to human beings through physical phenomena, such as fire or clouds. At other times, He will reveal His Kabowd, or doxa, glory – an aspect of His nature, attributes, and infinite perfection. In His sovereignty, He takes the initiative and decides which aspect of Himself to reveal. Of one thing we can be sure of: the will of God has always been to dwell among His people and to manifest Himself to humanity. In this study, we will review some examples from the Old and New Testaments in which God’s presence was revealed to human beings.

Part I: Manifestation in the Old Testament

In giving a brief history of the nation of Israel, how did Stephen describe the calling of the patriarch Abraham, who is the father of all who believe? Complete the following:

1. Acts 7:2-3: “... listen: _____

_____ and said to him, ‘Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I show you.’”

(a) How did God reveal His presence to Moses in a tangible way to get his attention in order to call him to a special task? (Exodus 3:2)

(b) To what task was God commissioning Moses? (Verse 10)

2. (a) In what dual form did God reveal His shekinah glory, or His manifest presence, to the Israelites during their forty years in the desert? (Exodus 13:21)

(b) Besides being a reminder that God was always with His people, what practical purpose did these manifestations provide? (Verse 21)

(c) What happened after Moses completed the tabernacle, which was the place of worship for the Israelites? (Exodus 40: 34)

(d) How did the Israelites respond to the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire as they followed the Lord’s leading in their journeys? (Verse 36-37)

3. What was the function of the cloud, as described by the psalmist? (Psalm 105:39a)

KEY DEFINITION: *A manifestation is a supernatural demonstration that can be perceived by the human senses.*

4. (a) What physical manifestation took place when God revealed Himself to the Israelites shortly before He gave them the Law through Moses? (Exodus 19:16)

(b) Describe the appearance of Mt. Sinai. What was the reason it looked that way? (Verse 18)

(c) In what way did God answer after Moses spoke? (Exodus 19:19b)

5. Describe what Moses and the leaders and elders of Israel saw when God revealed Himself to them. (Exodus 24:10b)

(a) From where did God speak to Moses in the tabernacle? (Exodus 25:22a; Numbers 7:89)

(b) Where did the psalmist say God dwells? (Psalm 80:1)

6. (a) What request did Moses make of God? (Exodus 33:18)

(b) What did God tell Moses he could and could not experience of Him? (Verses 19a, 23)

7. What did Moses' face look like after he had been in the Lord's presence and had spoken with Him? (Exodus 34:29b-30)

KEY DEFINITION: *In His sovereignty, as demonstrated through manifestations of His glory, God does what He wants, when He wants, and in the way He wants, without bringing in the participation of human beings. It is God doing His own works.*

8. (a) How did God make His presence known when Solomon commenced the dedication of the new temple in Jerusalem? (2 Chronicles 5:13b-14)

(b) What manifestations occurred after Solomon finished his prayer to the Lord? (2 Chronicles 7:1)

(c) How did Solomon and the other Israelites respond to these manifestations? (Verses 3-4)

9. (a) What physical phenomena were seen and heard by the prophet Elijah on the mountain before he heard the Lord's voice as He was passing by? (1 Kings 19:11b-12a)

(b) Was the Lord "in" these particular manifestations at that time? (Verses 11b-12a)

(c) In what specific form did Elijah hear God speak, following the fire? (Verse 12b)

(d) What action did Elijah take to cover himself when he knew he was in the presence of the Lord? (1 Kings 19:13a)

When God speaks to us, He might do so in an audible voice, or He might speak to our hearts.

10. In what way did the Lord manifest His glory and receive the prophet Elijah to heaven without his experiencing death? (2 Kings 2:11b)

(a) Describe what the prophet Isaiah first saw in his vision of the Lord sitting on His heavenly throne. (Isaiah 6:1)

(b) What were standing above the throne? (Verse 2)

(c) What were they calling to one another? (Verse 3)

(d) What two things happened after they cried out? (Verse 4)

11. (a) What did Isaiah say after seeing this vision? (Isaiah 6:5)

(b) How was Isaiah able to stand in God's presence, even though he was sinful? (Isaiah 6:6-7)

(c) What did the Lord say immediately after Isaiah's sin was cleansed, and how did Isaiah respond? (Verse 8)

12. (a) The prophet Ezekiel also had a vision of God on His throne, manifesting His glory. To what jewel did he compare the appearance of the "likeness of a throne"? (Ezekiel 1:26a)

(b) What did Ezekiel see on the likeness of the throne, "high above it"? (Verse 26b)

(c) How did he describe the appearance of the "man"? (Verse 27-28a)

13. (a) How did Ezekiel explain this appearance? Complete the following:
Ezekiel 1:28: "This was the appearance of _____."

(b) What did Ezekiel do when he saw this vision, and what did he hear? (Ezekiel 1:28b)

(c) What was the Lord's purpose in speaking to him? (Ezekiel 2:3-4)

14. What audible manifestations of God's glory did the prophet Ezekiel hear after the Spirit lifted him up? (Ezekiel 3:12-13)

God is everywhere but He does not manifest His presence everywhere.

Conclusion

Moses knew that the glory of God was more than a theological concept. That is why he asked God to show His glory – the most intimate aspect of His nature. The kingdom, the power, and the glory of God are heavenly realities that every believer can experience now. Are you experiencing the glory of God in your life? You need to have a revelation of the reality of God's glory so you can see its manifestation. Then, as you encounter the presence of God, you will be changed, transformed, and ignited by spiritual passion. As I wrote in the introduction to this Bible study, mere "religion" will never produce a supernatural experience with God because it is void of glory and life of the Lord. Since the distinction between religion and God's glory is so crucial, in the next study, we will learn how religious attitudes hinder the manifestation of God's presence and how you can move beyond practicing religion to having an encounter with your heavenly Father. Don't stay in the same place – there's more for you in God than what you are now experiencing!

Prayer of Activation

Father of glory, we ask for a revelation of Your majesty so that we may know You in a deeper way, impart to us the same earnest desire to know You that Abraham and Moses had. Show us manifestations of Your glory, and then activate us to make known your glory to everyone around us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Action Steps

Have you witnessed any manifestations of the Shekinah glory of God? If so, write down a description of these encounters with God's presence and glory, whether you have experienced the on your own or with other believers. Express gratitude to God for revealing Himself to you and ask Him to continue doing so. Then, share your experiences of God's glory with others, so they may desire to experience His presence, also. Take a step of faith and ask God to work through you to manifest His glory in the world. Pray that He will guide you in reaching out to your family members and friends to minister salvation, healings, and miracles. Then, following the leader of the Holy Spirit

Part II: Manifestations in the New Testament **(Personal Study)**

15. In what way did the shepherds experience God's glory when the angel of the Lord appeared and stood before them to tell them that Jesus the Saviour had been born? (Luke 2:9b)

(a) What did Jesus see and hear after He was baptized? (Matthew 3:16b-17)

(b) What detail did the gospel of Luke include about the manner in which the Holy Spirit descended like a dove? (Luke 3:22a)

16. (a) Combining the descriptions from two gospel accounts, how did Jesus' appearance change as He prayed on the mountain, accompanied by Peter, James, and John, and was "transfigured"? (Luke 9:29; Matthew 17:2b)

(b) Some biblical scholars believe the gospel of Mark is based on the apostle Peter’s recollections. What vivid words did Mark (perhaps from Peter’s account) use to describe how Jesus’ clothes changed? (Mark 9:3)

(c) During the transfiguration, what Old Testament figures talked with Jesus about His impending crucifixion? (Luke 9:30)

(d) In what way are they described as appearing? (Verse 31a)

(e) In what way did God the Father manifest Himself to Peter, James, and John at the transfiguration, and what did He tell them? (Matthew 17:5)

REFLECTIONS ON JESUS’ TRANSFIGURATION

Why was Jesus transfigured? What was the purpose of His changing in this way, since He was perfect? Jesus had laid aside His glory before He came to this world to be a human being. Therefore, He experienced the same temptations that any of us experience. He had a physical body, and His human nature was able to sin. Otherwise, the temptations He endured would have been meaningless. Prior to His transfiguration, Jesus had operated under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, but, through this manifestation, God showed to three of His disciples Jesus’ glory – the same glory that was available to them. When Jesus was transfigured, they were able to see Moses and Elijah with Him. I believe that Moses represents the Torah (the law), or the logos (the written Word of God); Elijah represents the church, God’s power, and the rhema word of (a word from God that speaks to our present circumstances and is in accordance with the Scriptures); the cloud represents the glory; and Jesus represents the kingdom of God, as well as both the former glory and – through His forthcoming resurrection – the latter glory.

In essence, God revealed to these three disciples that Jesus would bring His kingdom, His power, and His glory. Otherwise, how would the disciples have known that the two figures standing next to Jesus were Moses and Elijah? In the presence of God, people are known as they are. At the moment of Jesus’ transfiguration, the disciples were able to see who Jesus was on the inside in a physical, visible and tangible way.

17. (a) What manifestations were evident as God poured out His Holy Spirit on the followers of Jesus on the day of Pentecost? (Acts 2:2-3)

(b) what ability did Jesus’ followers receive when they were filled with the Holy Spirit? (Verse 4b)

(c) What did the devout Jewish men who were visiting Jerusalem from a number of foreign nations say they heard the disciples speaking in their own languages? (Acts 2:11b)

18. (a) What manifestation did Stephen see during his defence before the council when he looked into heaven? (Acts 7:55b)

(b) What was Stephen’s spiritual condition before he saw this sight? Complete the following:
Verse 55a: “But he , _____
_____”

19. (a) In what manner did Saul (later called Paul) experience the glory of Jesus on the road to Damascus as he was traveling to persecute the Christians there? (Acts 9:3b-4)

(b) What temporary physical effect did this experience have on Saul? (Verses 8a, 9a)

(c) What occurred immediately after Ananias, one of Jesus' followers, placed his hands on Saul? (Verse 18a)

(d) What had Ananias told Saul would happen to him at the same time he received his sight? (Acts 9:17b)

(e) After Saul received his sight, what did he do? (Verse 18b)

(f) Jesus had manifested Himself to Saul in order to call him to a special purpose. What was that purpose, which the Lord related to Ananias? Verse 15)

In the glory of God, every need is met.

20. (a) While Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God at midnight after being wrongfully beaten and imprisoned, what manifestation from God suddenly occurred, revealing His presence and power on their behalf? (Acts 16:26)

(b) In what ways did the jailer and his family respond to the witness of Paul and Silas after the jailer felt and saw these powerful signs from God? (Verses 33b, 34b)

21. When John was confined to the island of Patmos, he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day and received the "Revelation of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:1), in which the resurrected Jesus was depicted in His glory in symbolic form. How was Jesus clothed, and what was the appearance of His head, hair, eyes, and feet? (Revelation 1:13b-15a)

(a) To what did John compare Jesus' voice? (Verse 15b)

(b) What did He have in His right hand, and what came out of His mouth? (Verse 16a)

(c) How was His countenance described? (Verse 16b)

22. Further on in the vision, what occurred in the "temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven" (Revelation 15:5) that was reminiscent of what happened when Moses completed the Tabernacle and Solomon dedicated the temple? (Revelation 15:8a)

There are dimensions of the glory of God that few humans can stand.