Shew me thy glory

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[0:00] Would you turn with me now to the chapters we read? Could we first of all look again at Exodus chapter 33 and let us read there at verse 18.

And he said, The 55th verse of chapter 7.
Now in bringing these two portions of Scripture together this morning, we're considering the visions of God, the special revelation that he gave of himself to two of his servants, to Moses and Stephen. Their lives were separated by many centuries. But it's not that the length of time between them that is the important difference between Moses and Stephen.
The significant separation doesn't occur by the thousand and more years that lay between the two. It's rather the difference that rises rather from the fact that between these two occasions, between the two occasions that one described in Exodus and the other in the book of Acts, our Lord had been on earth.
[2:10] He had come. He had died in fulfillment of all the promises that God in covenant mercy had made with the patriarchs in days gone by.

And our Lord had risen from the dead. And Moses and Moses and Stephen are servants of God from two different ages.
Each was permitted a vision of God. Indeed, each was permitted a vision of God that pertained to the same aspect of God.
There is a continuity. They are both being informed and taught about God's mercy and God's grace. But we can't help but be struck by the fact that however grand, however great, however magnificent the vision given to Moses, that that was given to Stephen was far greater still.
It had an extra dimension. It had a clarity and a distinctness that far exceeded what Moses was permitted to see. Because it was a vision of the new age.
[3:28] The age of the risen Lord ascended into the heavens and dwelling in the eternal glory. But let's begin with Moses.

And in particular with the request that he made that's recorded for us here in verse 18. And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory.
What was it that Moses was asking for? What was it that he was talking about when he said, show me thy glory? Because it seems very much as if this request was in a certain measure denied. God didn't say, I'll show you my glory. He said, I'll show you my goodness. I'll proclaim my name. But he seems when he says, thou canst not see my face, to be saying my glory.
No, not yet. What was it that Moses was asking for? Well, you see, the glory of God is a visible manifestation of what God is.
[4:43] His greatness, his goodness, the excellence of God, shown forth, is God's glory. And it differs from the name of God.

The name of God tells mankind, tells us in our limitedness, in our finite capacity about God. But God's name tells us about him in words.
It's an expression of what God is. It's stating in one word or in many precisely what God is. That's what happens there in chapter 34.
The Lord proclaimed the name of the Lord and he said, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.
He was expressing in words his own character. He was teaching and telling Moses who it was, who he as Jehovah was.
[5:42] But the glory of God goes beyond words. It's a presentation to sight, to hearing, to the total spiritual being of man.

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It's a presentation to the totality of man of something, of what God is. Words can't express all that our God is.
and God's glory is presented apart from words, beyond them, because our thoughts, our capacity reaches out exhausted and unable to comprehend fully all that God is.
We can't capture the glory of God in words. And his true nature lies beyond the representation that we have.
How excellent in all the earth, Lord, our Lord, is thy name, who has thy glory far advanced above the starry frame. Look on a cloudless night up into the sky.
[6:53] See the stars of heaven millions and millions of miles away. See them be drawn out with the thought of the infinity, of the great distances that are involved.

Reach out and try to grasp the greatness of what is there in the universe. And then realize the creator who made it all is far greater still. It goes beyond our ability to lay hold of what is there.
And as we consider the God's glory far advanced above the starry frame, we are taken with a sense of the infinitude, of the perfection, of the infinite complexity and wonder, beyond what words can express, of what God is, of what he has shown himself to be.
But what particularly was it? What grand and visible manifestation of God was it that Moses did desire to see when he said, show me thy glory.
And there are three lines of thought, there are three lines of evidence I want to present to you just now because I think they come together to give a very specific meaning to this request, a meaning that's very relevant to our situation today.
[8:22] You see, Moses said, show me thy glory. And we've got, first of all, to remember, all it was that Moses had already seen.

Moses was one who had been permitted in his own lifetime, not by the hearing of the ear, not by the record of the past, but in his own experience. Moses had already been permitted to see a great deal.
He was the one to whom the angel of the Lord appeared in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush, when he looked and beheld the bush burning with fire and yet it wasn't consumed.
Moses had been there seeing something that was a visible manifestation of God in his glory. Moses had been there.
He had seen the power, the saving power of God when he had brought the Israelites out of Egypt, when they had sung in triumph on the other side of the Red Sea.
[9:25] Thy right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power. In the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee.

Moses knew what it was from his own experience to say, Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?
Indeed, by this stage in his life, Moses had already stood on the Mount of Sinai.
He had been there when it was burning with fire and enveloped in dark cloud and the presence of God was on the top of the mountain in any special way. So terrible was the sight that Moses had to confess, I exceedingly fear and quake.
Moses had already been up on the top of the mountain. He had already seen the God of Israel in that description that's given of their being under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone and as the body of heaven in its clearness.
[10:38] Moses had left the 70 elders and gone further up into the mountain, into the cloud, into the very cloud of Shekinah, the glory cloud.

And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. Israel. And Moses had been there in the midst of the cloud.
He'd been there for 40 days and 40 nights and yet he comes after all that, after having experienced all that, after having been privileged in that way, he comes and says, I beseech thee, show me thy glory.
And we might well ask, but Moses, haven't you seen it already? What more is there that you can want to see?
You've seen the power of God? You've seen the wonder in a way in which few others have been privileged of a vision of God seated on his throne?
[11:44] You've been for 40 days and 40 nights speaking with God face to face. What more is there that you can want, Moses, when you say, now, show me thy glory?

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Haven't you seen it all already? What more is there that you can be wanting God to reveal to you of his excellence? Now there's another line of thought.
Because these words are a prayer, they're not uttered in isolation, they are the culmination of this experience that's recorded in this chapter where Moses is in conversation with God, he is presenting to God his requests, acting as the mediator of this people, Moses had been assured by God that none of the calamities which he feared might come upon them because of their sin were in fact going to be meted out to Israel.
God wouldn't cut them off entirely. God wouldn't make for himself a new chosen people descended from Moses in the way in which Israel was descended from Abraham. God had also promised Moses that he wasn't going to leave his people to be led to the promised land just by an angel but that he himself was going to go with them.
He granted Moses' request that in this special way he would go before them to sustain, to encourage and to strengthen. Indeed he went so far as to grant his presence in as full a measure as it had been previously.
[13:29] And it's at that point that Moses says I beseech thee show me thy glory. Moses realized that he was dealing with a God who was prepared to do so much for his people.

He had already done much and he was willing to do more and that despite their sin. And Moses knew that he was on the verge of a mystery a glorious and a wonderful mystery regarding the nature of Jehovah.
There had been such vast preparations. There had been such a great and such an overwhelming pardon granted. There had been so many requests.
He had been plying God with requests. Not just that sin be forgiven but that favour be shown to those who were unworthy, those who had rebelled against covenant privilege.
And Moses' line of thought seems to be ending up with him saying, I haven't seen it all yet. There's something more that I must need know.
[14:48] How can it be that a people who had so rebelled could be dealt with so mercifully? If this has happened already, what yet must there be in store?

What is it that the almighty God is leading to through this wonderful display of what he is? And the mercy just shown, the renewed privileges just granted, kindle in the soul of Moses a desire to fathom the depths of God's mercy and love.
And he says, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. And there is a third line of evidence.
Not simply on the basis of Moses' past experience and him asking for something more. Not simply in terms of the logic of the prayer that Moses here presents.
But in terms of the divine answer that's given. I don't think God fully granted. I think the message is that God did not fully grant what Moses requested.
[16:06] But that he did respond in measure. He said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.

And then those words, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And I think there in God's reply, God who knew what was behind Moses' request, we can see that what it was that was in Moses' heart, what it was that he was trying to grasp and grapple with, what were the very ideas of the graciousness and the mercy of God.
It was that aspect of the glory of God that he wished to see and to delve into. how it was that God could be so merciful and gracious.
Show me thy glory. It wasn't the glory of creation that he was concerned with. Moses was concerned to see the glory of God in the supreme manifestation of who our God is and what he is in his mercy and in his grace and in his love towards sinners.
God gave an answer to the question but not in the fullness that Moses desired. There was a day that was still to come. Moses was as yet awaiting the day when as a man born out of due time he would appear with Elijah in glory and speak with the transfigured Lord of his exodus which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.
[17:50] It's that that really lies behind this request. Moses is saying to God show me thy glory. How can it be? How can I understand the mercy the grace and the love that has been shown?

Let me enter into the mystery of how the just and the holy and the perfect God can be the one who extends such wonderful mercy to sinners.
how is it reconciled? How can it be that rebels such as Israel have been can be pardoned?

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What is it that is in store for this people so highly privileged? And Moses there in his own day was given a vision of God's glory as relating to his grace and mercy.
a vision that went far but still stopped short of fullness. As we read there it seems as if God's glory appeared brightly but it appeared without form.
[19:03] It seemed he appeared to Moses in much the same way as he appeared in glory in the Shekinah cloud that hovered over the mercy seat.

It was like it but it was more intense. It was fuller. It went further because Moses had seen the Shekinah glory, the cloud, the glory cloud before but he'd never seen it in quite this way because we read afterwards that on this occasion Moses' face shone because of the way in which God had revealed himself to him.
There was a response to Moses' request things went further than anything Moses had received before. It was a heightened experience and a greater privilege but it was still blurred.
If I could put it this way it was still out of focus. Moses was still very much a child of his own age.
One of the great dangers of those days was the danger of idolatry of image worship.
We've seen that in the previous chapter. That was the sin that Israel fell into. As if God could be comprehended by means of some visible representation.
[20:26] And when this God shows himself in his glory it's in a blurred way as if to stop any possibility of images being made. there was Moses hidden in the cleft of the rock covered by God's hand while he passed by and permitted only to see in part only to see as it were God God's glory going off into the distance.

Moses saw as it were the fringes of the robe of deity. Oh it was light. It was a message clearly given by God. The word of keeping mercy for thousands of forgiving iniquity and transgression was clearly stated.
But you see what was missing was the basis on which this could be done. That was what Moses was after. He wanted the basis. He wanted not simply the fact of God's mercy.
He realised he was on the very verge of something tremendous and great. And when he besought God show me thy glory he was asking to be let into the essential secret of how it is that God can be just and forgiving.
And so the centuries pass by. God's purposes are worked out. His revelation proceeds and God's love is fully disclosed.
[22:01] in the coming of Jesus Christ. And when we come to Stephen's vision we're compelled to recognise that Stephen is seeing the same thing as Moses.

It is the same aspect of the reality of God that is being shown to Stephen. And yet how vastly clearer the revelation.
How further advanced is the truth. Being full of the Holy Spirit he looked up steadfastly into the heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.
The glory that Moses had seen was like a bright cloud. The cloud has now resolved itself into human form.
the picture is in focus. The mystery is revealed. The grand answer has been given. There is greater light. There is greater assurance.
[23:07] There is greater confidence and hope. Because God is manifest in the flesh and to see the glory of God to enter into the fullness of all God is in his excellency is now no longer to enter in to go onto the top of the mountain to enter into the cloud to see brightness and to be impressed and overwhelmed by hearing the name of God proclaimed.

It has gone further. It has been exalted. The glory of God has taken on human form and it is to be seen in him who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express representation of his person.
it is to be seen in Jesus Christ himself. And it's very clear that Stephen recognized the true divinity of Christ.
We have there in verse 59 a rather misleading I think edition. It's in italics in the authorized version. they stoned Stephen calling upon God and God's italics and saying Lord Jesus receive my spirit. It's calling upon and saying Lord Jesus. It's invoking Jesus himself in prayer. It is addressing Jesus as God.
[24:39] It is addressing him as the one who is the exalted mediator God and man. Seeing Jesus in his exalted humanity and recognizing that it is indissolubly linked to the second person of the

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Trinity.

Stephen in this vision in which he is able to enter into heaven sees Jesus as God and bows and bows before him in prayer and in his moment of distress in his last hour of great suffering addresses Jesus in prayer recognizing his divinity.
But for Stephen and this is the essential point the glory that was once bright but indistinct from Moses is resolved into the perfectly focused vision of Jesus in glory.
The pardon that was once taught but not explained is resolved into the crucified and risen Lord in glory at the Father's right hand.
The life to be lived is found through death restored with him and in glory forever with him. And as we come to a communion season as we consider coming to the Lord's table it is very appropriate for us to come with Moses prayer O Lord I beseech thee show me thy glory.
[26:26] It is very appropriate for us to come with it in the sense in which Moses came pleading that God would reveal to us the basis upon which he is the merciful and the forgiving God that he would enable us to enter into an understanding and to grasp something of the infinite excellence of the transcendent splendor that is his as the God of grace.

and we are to come rejoicing that we are not left as Moses was with a statement a very precious statement of the fact that God is gracious of the fact that he forgives iniquity and shows compassion.
We are to come seeking the vision the response that God gives the vision of the new age because Stephen's privilege is one which is the privilege of every child of God in the new age to see in Jesus Christ the culmination of all God's working down through the ages to see in Jesus Christ the answer to the tremendous and perplexing problem of the righteous God forgiving sinners of the holy God welcoming the impure of the God who is transcendent being pleased to enter into fellowship with those who are finite and the glory of God that we would see revealed is the glory that can be seen in the face of Jesus
Christ in the pure and the spotless life of Christ because it is only as we see him it is only as we rejoice in all that he is that we are truly brought into the immediate presence of God he that hath seen me hath seen the father but I would ask you not only to beseech God that he would show you his glory and that he would show you it as it has been out worked in the coming of Jesus Christ in the life of Jesus Christ in his death and in his resurrection and ascension to glory but plead with him that he would enable you to grasp what it was that Stephen saw that day because when we talk of our Lord in glory and scripture does this often the picture that is given the way in which we are taught is of the Lord seated at the right hand of God but that wasn't the vision that Stephen got that day there is an extra dimension here there is an even grander aspect of God's glory and of the heavenly vision that is brought particularly before us here it is not
Jesus seated at the right hand it is Jesus standing in heaven what are we to understand by that what are we what is it what is this extra dimension that is being brought before us it is this it is the present involvement of our Lord with this church we are asking not simply that we be told about what he did in the past great foundational inescapable magnificent yes but this vision goes beyond it it reminds us of the present involvement and care and concern it is as if our Lord is so involved in the situation of Stephen so concerned and so caring for those who are his that he could no longer sit but is standing looking down in love and in mercy and in compassion may it be that we would know our
[31:01] Lord as the one who is ready to help as the one who is ready to welcome because it's to his table we would come oh we remember him oh we remember his death and we remember it till he come in the future but there is the present dimension that we must not escape from there is the present reality there is this aspect of the glory of the graciousness of God that God now is involved with each and every one of his people there is a particular and an individual and an ongoing care and it is our choicest possession it is a precious revelation and a truth to be treasured above all else that right now at right at this very moment and at each and every moment the Lord is watching over and governing and helping and ready to be with those who are his it is not an exercise of memory simply that we are engaged in it is not an exercise of patience waiting waiting watchfully it is an exercise that now realizes that the

Lord is at the head of his table that the petitions that we present on earth are echoed and purified and presented by our Lord as the great high priest who is interceding on our behalf in the heavenly places and it is the case that he comes and he helps and he sustains by the power of his spirit

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Stephen being full of the holy spirit looked up and saw may it be that we would know that fullness may it be that our Lord himself would grant unto us that we would not come in a merely formal fashion that we would not come with cold hearts and cold souls that our exercises in confessing sin and in seeking his face would not be a ritual that we have gone through but that we would be given this gift of grace this vision this perception this spiritual understanding that our
Lord is looking at us each one in our feebleness in our need in our desperation and he is ready to pour upon us individually of his spirit to give us the strength to bring us in a right way to give us the strength that the elements may not simply be physical elements to us but that they may by the Holy Spirit bring vividly to our hearts and our remembrance all all all that our Lord has done and all that he is now doing on the basis of his perfect and completed work and Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped oh if we're seeing God in that way if we have that vision how much more privileged than Moses who heard the name of the
Lord proclaimed and saw the blurred vision receding into the distance how much more privileged we are to look to the risen Lord with the pierced hands and the pierced side ascended into glory and how much more haste should we make haste to come and to bow down before him haste to enter in and to rejoice in the reality of Stephen's vision because it is the portion of all the Lord's people Stephen as the child of the new age is showing what is now available and made over to each and every one of God's people oh that we could say we beheld his glory the glory as of the only begotten of the father full of grace and truth may it be our desire to behold the glory of God shown forth in the risen savior standing in loving care and concern for each one of his people all the time and especially in their hour of need let us pray how dimly we see you lord and how little we expect how slow our hearts are to be warmed within us as we consider thy word and wonder at the marvel of all that thou art as the
God of grace we give thee thanks that thou dost speak to us by thy word but especially at this time we give thee thanks that thou in thy wisdom has provided times of communion and of fellowship when we may gather round the lord's table and be reminded not only by the words spoken but by the visible and tangible signs and seals of thy grace and goodness help us oh lord to use this time to draw close to thee to have our love kindled to have our vision restored and to have the opportunity of ascribing unto thee in Jesus Christ thy son all glory and majesty and honor and power both now and eternally amen

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