

END-TIMES ISSUES



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#35 The majestic glory of God in Old Testament Israel.

1

HOW???

HOW can an uncreated being reveal itself in something that is created?

⇒ Especially when the uncreated being is *infinitely greater* than the created? CAN'T!!

"But will God really dwell on earth with humans? **The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you.**"

2 Chronicles 6:18a (NIV)

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>> **EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY** <<

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2

EVEN SO...

God *has* revealed himself to a limited degree.

⇒ **AND** he has created us in his "image" so that we can comprehend what he has revealed about himself. CAN!!

So God created man **in His own image; in the image of God** He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 1:27 (BSB); see also v. 26.

In doing this, God made us capable of ruling over creation as his representatives, in a way that reflects his character, demonstrates his moral perfections, and brings him glory.

** BUT we must be willing to accept God's self-revelation as he reveals himself, and not twist and distort it into what we want him to be. CAN!!
But only if...!!

3

God, in his fullness, cannot be seen, even when he's present.

- God's "person" cannot be seen. His fullness *cannot* be accurately expressed by *anything* that is created.

... the King eternal, immortal, and **invisible**, the only God...

1 Timothy 1:17b (BSB)

No one has ever seen God ...

1 John 4:12a (BSB)

- What can be seen – a *limited* expression of his being – is a **brightness** that is so unlike any brightness or light in creation, that we cannot look directly at it, or we will *die*. We cannot even *approach* it without being specially consecrated for that purpose... or we will die.

[God] who alone is immortal and who **lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.** To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

1 Timothy 6:16 (NIV)

4

WHAT is the fullest expression of God's being that creation is capable of containing?

- It is NOT creation itself (though it *does* reflect his glory).
- It is NOT humans (though made in the image of God).
- It is NOT even Jesus, the "God-man."

⇒ It is the penetrating brightness of his majestic glory. This is the **fullest possible expression of God's being in creation** – a *brightness* we cannot look directly at.

Even when Moses saw *more* of God than anyone else mentioned in Scripture, he was *not permitted* to see the *full* expression of God's glory. God told him...

"You cannot see My face, for **no one can see Me and live.**"

Exodus 33:20b (BSB)

What Moses saw was so great, that it caused his face to *glow*. But had he seen any more, it would have been fatal.


5

HOW can God be *visibly* present without everyone dying?

The brightness of God's majestic glory indicated that *God was there*. Since people would die if they stared directly at him, he had to be veiled or covered in some way, to limit what people could see.

So how did Israel survive?

- God surrounded the glory of his presence with a cloud (by day) and a fire (by night).
 - ✓ Then, people could look toward him, and survive.
- Even then, there was *still* danger, if they got too close.
 - ✓ The area around God would be affected by his presence. It would become holy, and could not be approached without specific preparations – and then, *only with permission*.



6

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N ⇒ **Because of who he is:** The uncreated God, holy and righteous.
G ⇒ **Because of what we are:** Sinners, enemies of God (Romans 5:10), unable to approach God and survive.
E
R

Approaching God is DANGEROUS.
Our sin only makes matters worse.

Sin is a total contradiction to all that God is. It is a rejection and repudiation of God.
Because of this, sin *cannot* exist in God's presence.

THIS LEAVES US IN A SERIOUSLY BAD SITUATION.
At the future judgment, we *have* to approach God. If Jesus does not stand between us and God, we *will not survive*.

And I saw the dead, great and small, **standing before the throne**.
... And the dead were **judged according to their deeds** ...
Revelation 20:12a, c (BSB)

We have a PROBLEM: SIN!

We have *sinned*, and it has cut off our access to God. To regain access will require something that *no human can accomplish*.

- We created the problem:** Our sin has caused alienation from God, and has earned us a punishment that must of *necessity* come.
- Only God can solve this problem:** God himself will have to bear the consequences (punishment) that we earned. (*Jesus* took this punishment upon himself.)
- Our duty** is to *trust* God to do what he has *promised* to do. Those willing to trust him will become part of his eternal plan for creation.

OUR HOPE!

IN THE BEGINNING:
God made creation for a purpose;
and he's going to fulfil that purpose.
⇒ The devil is *not* going to win!

In the Old Testament era, God provided a temporary means that would enable his people to approach him.

- God provided a way; but it would involve very specific actions – including animal sacrifices for sin.
- However, the people would have to do it *exactly* how they were instructed, or it would have no effect. *When done wrong, horrible consequences would occur.*

THINGS DONE WRONG
SOME EXAMPLES

- ✓ **Nadab and Abihu** (Leviticus 10:1-5) – disobeyed God, and burned incense that was not authorized by God. ⇒ Killed by fire from God – perhaps like a lightning bolt?
- ✓ **Uzzah** (1 Chronicles 13:9-10) – put his hand on the ark of the covenant (on which the glory of God was residing). ⇒ Died.
- ✓ **King Uzziah** (2 Chronicles 26:16-23) – entered the temple area to burn incense (a duty only for the priests). ⇒ Became a leper for the rest of his life.

Even in the New Testament era, it is *still* dangerous to approach the radiant majesty of God's glory.

- Especially if we choose to live in sin... → It is a **fearful** thing to fall into the hands of the living God.
Hebrews 10:31 (BSB)
- Our *attitude* must be influenced by God's nature.

Therefore, since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us be filled with gratitude, and so worship God acceptably with **reverence and awe**. "**For our God is a consuming fire.**"
Hebrews 12:28-29 (BSB); affirming what Moses said in Deuteronomy 4:24.

- God is to be **feared**. It's the **unsaved** who *don't* fear God!

WHAT SCRIPTURE COMMANDS: ... **fear** God ...
1 Peter 2:17b (BSB); see also Matthew 10:28.

WHAT THE WICKED DO: "There is no **fear** of God before their eyes."
Romans 3:18 (BSB)

Does all this offend us?

- We are sinners, and are used to sinning – just like fish are used to living in water.
- Our sin keeps us from recognizing the full seriousness of sin, or the complete purity of God's holiness.
- IF we would let Scripture *change* the way we think...** we would *fear* God, as Scripture commands! And it would influence our attitude and the way we live.

GOD AS A CONSUMING FIRE?
THE NEED TO FEAR GOD? PEOPLE DYING?



Even the New Testament teaches us:

- We *must* fear God – 1 Peter 2:17; Luke 12:4-5.
- Doing so will affect our conduct – 2 Corinthians 5:11.
- It's the *wicked* who don't fear God – Romans 3:18.
- All* will eventually fear God – Revelation 15:4

It's better if we choose to fear God **now** than to wait and fear him **later**, at the judgment.

The God of the Bible dwells in unapproachable light...

The light of his presence is infinitely greater than the sun!

- ❖ **Without the sun:** We cannot live ... but if we were to stare at it, we would *go blind*.
- ❖ **Without God:** We cannot live ... but if we were to get even a *glance* at the full brightness of his glory, we would *die*.

This is the majestic glory of God that dwelt in Israel!

THIS IS THE GLORY OF GOD who created light *before* he created the sun – and later used this light to *teach* us the difference between good and evil.

The **Light** shines in the **darkness**, and the **darkness** has not overcome it.

John 1:5 (BSB)

And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you: God is **light**, and in Him there is no **darkness** at all.

If we say we have fellowship with Him yet walk in the **darkness**, we lie and do not practice the truth.

But if we walk in the **light** as He is in the **light**, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:5-7 (BSB)

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THIS IS THE GLORY OF GOD who created the sun, moon and stars on the *fourth day* – and uses them to *teach* us about his glory.

The heavens declare **the glory of God**; the skies proclaim **the work of his hands**.

Psalms 19:1 (NIV)

- At the same time, he warns Israel that the sun, moon and stars are NOT God – and they are NOT to be worshipped as though they were.

If a man or woman living among you in one of the towns the Lord gives you is found **doing evil** in the eyes of the Lord your God in violation of his covenant, and contrary to my command has worshiped other gods, **bowing down to them or to the sun or the moon or the stars in the sky**, ... [that person must be put to death – vs. 4-7].

Deuteronomy 17:2-3 (NIV)

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THIS IS THE GLORY OF GOD who – *in love* – veiled the brightness of his glory in **fire and cloud** – so that he could spare his people from sudden death.

- In the fire and cloud, he personally led Israel, as they journeyed through the wilderness.

"Because of your great compassion you did not abandon them in the wilderness. By day **the pillar of cloud** did not fail to guide them on their path, nor **the pillar of fire** by night to shine on the way they were to take."

Nehemiah 9:19 (NIV)

THIS IS THE GLORY OF GOD that Moses got a *partial glimpse of*, without the veil of cloud or fire – and it caused his face to glow. (As mentioned on a previous slide.)

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THIS IS THE GLORY OF GOD that later resided in the **tabernacle and temple**, between the cherubim (special angels), above the ark of the covenant, in the most holy room of the tabernacle/temple.

"Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, **enthroned between the cherubim**, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth."

Isaiah 37:16 (NIV)

- Only the high priest could enter God's presence, and only once a year. But first, he had to be purified. It would require the blood of a sacrifice. And he had to first burn incense inside the most holy room (in order to form a *cloud* that would veil the brightness of God's glory – so the high priest wouldn't die).



16

THIS IS THE GLORY OF GOD that departed from Israel, after residing in the nation for **NEARLY 9 CENTURIES**.* The nation had totally abandoned its God, and there was no reason for him to stay.

- Ezekiel tells us about the glory of God leaving the temple:

Then the glory of the LORD **rose from above the cherubim** and **stood over the threshold of the temple**. ...

Then the glory of the LORD **moved away from the threshold** of the temple ...

... **at the entrance of the east gate** of the house of the LORD...

And the glory of the LORD **rose up from within the city** and **stood over the mountain east of the city**.

Ezekiel 10:4a, 18a, 19b, 23 (BSB)

* (Estimated time from Moses' life to just before the destruction of the temple.)

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THIS IS THE GLORY OF GOD that was *absent* when the temple was rebuilt.

- The ark of the covenant was also missing from the temple. Tradition suggests that there may have been a flat stone at the location where the ark *had been*.

In this temple, the radiant glory of God was *not* present. But it had a special honor of its own: **Jesus visited this temple**.

- It was different, though, because Jesus' glory was limited by his human form. (Compare to John 17:5.)
- Only *genuine* followers of the God of Israel could recognize who Jesus was. (Even the religious leaders – hypocrites – couldn't.)

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. **We have seen His glory**, the glory of the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14 (BSB)

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THIS IS THE GLORY OF GOD that will someday return to Israel, when the nation turns back to the Lord (under the New Covenant).

- Ezekiel tells us that the glory of God will return to a *new* temple. This did not happen with the temple that was built in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah; so it has to refer to something still future.

... and I saw the glory of the God of Israel **coming from the east.**

... and the glory of the LORD **entered the temple** through the gate facing east.

... and the glory of the LORD **filled the temple.**

Ezekiel 43:2a, 4, 5b (BSB)

- Consider Ezekiel's attitude, when he realized that God's glory was filling the temple. (Something for us to learn from.)

I looked and saw the glory of the LORD filling His temple, and **I fell facedown.**

Ezekiel 44:4b (BSB)

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THIS IS THE GLORY OF GOD that will reside in the New Jerusalem **forever.**

This will occur when Jesus returns – and at that time, the full expression of his glory (as the God-man) will also be revealed.

- Jesus' glory (as God in human form) and the glory of the One seated on the throne (the majestic glory of God) will be so great, that their brightness will radiate throughout the New Jerusalem.

... the holy city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, **shining with the glory of God.**

Its **radiance** was like a most precious jewel, like a jasper, as clear as crystal. ...

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, because **the glory of God illuminates** the city, and the Lamb is its **lamp.**

Revelation 21:10b-11, 23 (BSB)

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QUESTION #1:

Will we ever be able to look directly at the radiant glory of God in all its fullness?

- Probably not. (We've already seen many Scriptures that say it can't happen.)
- But we will see Jesus... and we will be satisfied.**

Israel experienced God's presence in a way that was never experienced under any other covenant.

Today, we don't have that experience. But:

- ✓ We have Jesus, who fulfilled the "hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20).
- ✓ We have the Spirit of God dwelling inside us.
- ✓ And we look forward to the day when God's presence will once again reside among people... forever. ⇒ This is the hope of *all* saved people – past, present and future!

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QUESTION #2:

What happened to the ark of the covenant?

- We are not told.** Most likely, it was destroyed when the temple was destroyed. (Stories about it still existing are just *stories*.)
- Remember this:** Israel had rejected the covenant. The glory of God no longer resided over the ark. Therefore, the ark was no longer needed.
- If the ark did exist and was found:** People would respond to it the wrong way! Perhaps they would worship it. Or they might treasure it, because of its historical significance, while *ignoring* the God who once resided over it.
- Jeremiah says:** In the future, nobody will even think about it...

"... they will no longer discuss the ark of the covenant of the LORD. **It will never come to mind,** and no one will remember it or miss it, nor will another one be made."

Jeremiah 3:16 (BSB)

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Our Mission

Rejoicing in the presence of God!

We don't have the brightness of God's glory living **among** us (as Israel did); but we *do* have the Holy Spirit living **within** us (individually and as a group).

We can make it our goal to:

- Live a life controlled by the Spirit, who is in us.
- Appreciate *other* aspects of God's glory ...
 - ✓ who he is, and
 - ✓ what he has done (and will do).
- Look forward to the New Jerusalem, when God *will* once again dwell on earth, in the fullness of his glory.

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Credits

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