

Text: Exod. 24:9-18

Title: "The glory of the covenant"

Time: 2/27/2022 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: Weddings are about the glory of a covenant. A man and a woman enter the bonds of holy matrimony in the sight of God and man. Two become one as husband and wife vow together those two life-changing words: "I do."

In agreement with the solemnity of that promise and the glory of God's design for marriage and the home, the wedding arrangements and ceremony are uniquely glorious as well. The elements of glory at a wedding include the bride's dress, all in white, the beautiful pageantry of the wedding parties, the gift of the bride from parents to groom, the exchange of wedding bands, and then at the end the reception meal, complete with a cake beautifully decorated.

God and His people are entering into a covenant at Sinai, and like a wedding, this is an especially glorious event in the history of Israel. We even read here about a celebratory reception (v. 11). Our passage describes other elements of glory as well, which were a part of God's entering into covenant with His people, whom He had redeemed from the slavery of Egypt through the blood of the Passover lamb.

There are four elements of the glory of the covenant that are emphasized by the passage for us to consider this morning.

I. The glory of the covenant is the sight of God (vv. 9-11).

Application: We will remember from a couple of weeks ago that Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders were to worship God at a distance. From that distance, they are

blessed here to see God. They see especially that under His feet is the workmanship of blue sapphire, as clear as the sky.

Ezekiel's eyes beheld something very similar when the Lord called him to service. There we learn that the feet of Exodus 24 belong to One who looks like a man, and we learn also that the sapphire workmanship under His feet included the throne from which he ruled (Ezek. 1:26-28). Having seen God, Ezekiel falls on his face, and he listens to God's voice.

Isaiah also records that he saw Jehovah with his eyes (Isa. 6:1). He recognized the Lord's royal train, which filled the temple. He too fell down at the sight confessing, "Woe is me, for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (v. 5). Soon, Isaiah too hears the Lord's voice (v. 8).

Coming to the New Testament, the Apostle John writes about the day that Isaiah saw Jehovah (John 12:37-41). John tells us that Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ when he saw Yahweh high and lifted up. He also tells us that in his own day many could see this same Jesus, low and humble, but they had trouble believing the One they saw. They did not believe Jesus is the Creator God. They did not fall down before Him. They did not listen to His voice.

The Apostle John further explains the role of the Son of God in these sightings of God in the Old Testament in John 1:18: "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son [God, NASB] who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." John also records how Jesus told Philip, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father" (John 14:9; 12:45).

Wherever God is seen by human eyes, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the One being seen. John tells us that Jesus, God's

Son, exists in the bosom of the Father. That is as close as we can come to a scriptural definition of the nature of the Trinity. We must say that it is an anthropomorphism to speak of the Father's bosom. Perhaps we get a small sense of what this is like when we give someone we love a hug. That still falls far short of the reality of the relationship between the Father and the Son, who are both one in one sense and two in a different sense, but there is something uniquely special about the experience of a hug, and the love conveyed by that human experience is certainly at minimum what John tells us here that the Father and the Son enjoy together.

So the sight of the Son of God is included in the glory of God's covenant with man. Man sees God in Jesus Christ. Do you and I see God in Christ? Have we fallen before Him in worship and listened for His voice? Or has our experience been only the blindness of unbelief, like the Jews of John 12, who saw Jesus as only a man?

II. The glory of the covenant is the Word of God (vv. 12-14).

Application: God promises Moses that He is going to give His Word to His people, which was the contractual terms and requirements of the covenant He is making with them. We have studied some of those in Chapters 20-23, including the Ten Commandments from the two tables of stone. In future chapters of Exodus and the Book of Leviticus, detailed instructions for the tabernacle and the worship practices of Israel will be added.

Our passage tells us two things that are glorious about this covenantal gift of the Word of God to Israel. First, it is glorious because God wrote it (v. 12). We have in our hands not the work of ancient authors merely. We have in our hands this morning the words that God wrote. Think of your favorite human author; then compare that author's wisdom

and insight with that of the omniscient and loving God of heaven, and you will have a sense of the difference between the glory of this book and the glory of any other book you and I can read.

Which brings us to the second glorious truth about the Word of God. God not only wrote it; He did so for our instruction (v. 12). He wrote it for you and for me. The first Psalm speaks of how blessed the man is who, rather than following the wisdom of men, may delight day and night in the law of the Lord (Psalm 1:1-3).

Our passage hints at trouble soon coming to Israel under the jurisdiction of human wisdom apart from God's Word (v. 14). Aaron and Hur were good men, even wise men, but we shall soon find out in our study of Exodus that the plan of verse 14 does not go well (the golden calf).

The plan to follow human wisdom will not go well in our lives either. Do we see the glory of the Word of God this morning – that God wrote it and He did so for our instruction? Are we reading our Bibles like we see its glory?

III. The glory of the covenant is the cloud of God (vv. 15-16).

Illustration: If you have flown in an airliner, you know what it is like to be in a dense cloud. You are glad for the guidance systems in the aircraft, because when you are in a cloud your ability to see is very limited.

Application: The cloud of Exodus 24 is not just any cloud. It is the cloud of Exod. 13:21 and 16:10. It is the cloud of God's glory. Moses enters it, and then he waits six days before finally hearing from the Lord on the seventh day.

So, what do six days in a cloud have to do with God's glory? I think a verse in Proverbs can help us answer that question: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter" (25:2). For these six days, God is concealed or hidden in the cloud, imperceptible to Moses.

In a time of great suffering, Job spoke of the difficulty he had understanding where the Lord was: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him" (Job 23:8-9).

But God's hiddenness ultimately is a test of our faith, an opportunity for us to trust Him as He deserves to be trusted, to walk by faith in His promise rather than the evidence we can see with our own eyes. Moses waited six days in the cloud. Around day two or so, I think I would have been wondering what was going on. Moses was faithful in a time that required him to wait and not yet understand.

Job practiced the same faithfulness. After recognizing God's hiddenness, he professes his faith in the Lord: "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (vv. 10-12).

It is the way of the glory of the Lord to hide in the cloud and to ask us to patiently trust Him. We magnify His glory when we trust His promise, even though we are suffering and we do not understand His purposes. One purpose we can always be assured of, though—He loves us enough to have

sent His Son to die for us, and in that love He is determined that we shall come forth as gold.

IV. The glory of the covenant is the fire of God (vv. 17-18).

Application: We are told that Moses spent forty days and forty nights in this mountain, which looked to the children of Israel as though it were ablaze with a five-alarm fire. Deut. 9:9 tells us that Moses neither ate nor drank during those forty days and nights.

This forty-day fast experience happens two other times in Scripture. The first is 1 Kings 19, where Elijah flees in fear of Jezebel, running forty days and nights to Sinai, having nothing to eat along the way. The Lord finds the weary Elijah in a cave and asks His servant, "What are you doing here?"

The other, of course, happens at the beginning of our Lord's ministry in Matthew 4 and Luke 4, where the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness for forty days and nights of fasting. After that period, Jesus is very hungry.

The OT commentators Keil and Delitzsch put these three episodes together by saying that each was "a period of testing, [a period] of trial of faith." Where these episodes differ, of course, is that Jesus is the only One who passed the test.

Israel falls into idolatry during the test of Moses's absence for forty days and nights, after which Moses slams the two tablets of stone down in anger, which God had written with His own finger. At some tragic level, Israel's failure becomes also a failure of Israel's leader.

Elijah's failure is more obvious. He was running in fear and self-pity from Jezebel, and after asking Elijah what he was

doing in the cave, the Lord found it necessary to have Elijah anoint his successor, Elisha.

Jesus, of course, never fails. He passed the period of temptation with a mighty victory over the enemy, one that helped to secure His mission to be our sinless sacrifice, the Lamb without blemish and without spot. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "Being found in fashion as a man, [Jesus] humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). Unlike Moses, unlike Elijah, and unlike you and I, Jesus passed the test of the fire of God's judgment on sin. He did so by offering Himself in obedience to the Father as a sacrifice for our sins. He did so that you and I and all the Israelites trembling at the sight of the fires of Sinai in Exodus 24 could be saved.

Conclusion: God's covenantal work of saving mankind is truly glorious. We have seen much of that glory in the historical account of Israel's covenant with the nation of Israel. It is wonderful to be able to read the account of the glory of this divine wedding ceremony between God and His people this morning (similar to looking at a wedding album).

But soon the day will break, and the dark shadows of our earthly existence will flee away. Soon with our own eyes we shall behold the glory of God's covenant to save poor sinners like you and like me. Soon we shall not only read about the glory of our marriage covenant with the Lamb, but we shall see Him and experience His glory ourselves.

Again, it is the Apostle John who tells us what we will see on that glorious day: "And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, 'Amen; Alleluia.' And a voice came out of the throne, saying, 'Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.' And I heard as it

were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.' And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, 'Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he saith unto me, 'These are the true sayings of God'" (Rev. 19:4-9).

What Moses wrote of the glories of God's covenant with Israel at Sinai are the true sayings of God. What John wrote of the glories of the wedding supper of the Lamb of heaven are also the true sayings of God. Do you believe the true sayings of God this morning? Do you believe that God promises to save you from your sin by the blood of His own Son, Jesus Christ? Do you see the glory of this covenant, God's promise to save sinners in Christ?

"A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction – the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*