



LESSON 27

God's presence fills the tabernacle

EXODUS 33:1-34:35; 40:1-38



God dwells among His people with great glory.



"The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.'" (Exod 34:6–7).

Supporting Truths Objectives

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God dwells among His people. 2. God's glory is shining. 3. God's glory is kind. 4. God's glory is holy. 5. God shows His glory to the humble. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe how God first stayed away from the people, but then came into the tabernacle. 2. Describe Moses' face and the fiery cloud over the tabernacle. 3. List the words God used that describe His kindness, and describe His kindness to Moses and Israel. 4. List the words God used that describe His holiness, and explain how God showed Himself holy to Israel. 5. Describe how God showed His glory to Moses, and how He returned to Israel after they repented and obeyed. |
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STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God's presence fills the tabernacle • Exodus 33:1–34:35; 40:1–38



Lesson Summary

After Israel's idolatry, God said that the people would still enter the land of Canaan, but He said that He would no longer go with them Himself. The people were very sad, and Moses knew that without God's presence Israel would be no different than the other nations. So Moses prayed, and God answered with kindness: He showed Moses His glory, and then He came with glory into the tabernacle. God displayed His glory through His holiness, kindness, and bright splendor.

Spotlight on the Gospel

God revealed His glory to Moses as an act of grace, and God continues to reveal His glory through Christ to those He has chosen by grace. As God came near to the humble Moses and to repentant Israel, so also He draws near to all those who repent and humble themselves, depending on Christ alone. In Christ, God displays how great He is by His kindness and justice by saving sinners, and by providing a just sacrifice for sins.

LAST WEEK



God punishes Israel's idolatry
Exodus 32:1–35

THIS WEEK



God's presence fills the tabernacle
*Exodus 33:1–34:35;
40:1–38*

NEXT WEEK



God ordains the sacrificial system
Leviticus 1:1–7:38

DELIVERANCE

Lesson Commentary

God dwells among His people with great glory.

After worshiping the golden calf the people deserved to be completely destroyed. In response to their great sin, God, for a time, pulled back His glorious presence from among the Israelites. But Moses prayed to God on the people's behalf, and God heard Moses' prayer and returned, demonstrating his gracious forgiveness. After the completion of the tabernacle, God's presence descended on it, filling it with His **glory**—the display of how great He is. God dwelt in the midst of His people, just as He had promised.

The LORD kept His glory away from the sinful people (33:1–6)

Although God was gracious to Israel after their idolatry, their sin still separated them from God. God showed His grace by staying faithful to His promise to Abraham to give Israel the land of Canaan (Exod 33:1–2; Neh 9:17). He would even send an angel with them to drive out their enemies. But because of their sin, God Himself would not go with them (Exod 33:3). God's presence is so **holy**, so pure and opposed to sin that He might destroy the people in a single moment because of their sin (33:5; Ps 1:5).



THINK ABOUT IT

Sin always separates and divides man from God.

The people responded in the right way. They mourned (Exod 33:4). They removed all their jewelry as a sign of their grief (33:6). They grieved because they saw that their sin had separated them from

God (Isa 59:2). This separation is illustrated by the tent of meeting (a temporary place used by Moses to talk to God before the tabernacle) being set up far away from the camp (Exod 33:7). God's glory and man's sin do not mix.

Moses prayed on the basis of God's favor and glory (33:7–23)

God did not completely remove His presence from Israel. Moses habitually went into the tent of meeting

to pray, and the pillar of cloud would come down on the tent (33:9). God was showing favor to Moses by meeting with Moses in a very real and direct way in the tent of meeting (33:11). When it says that God spoke to Moses "face to face," it does not mean that Moses saw God, since later it is clear that no one can see God's face—the fullness of His glory—and live (33:20). Saying that God spoke to Moses face to face is an expression meaning that God spoke to him clearly, without hiding anything in mystery (Num 12:8). God spoke to Moses openly, as one friend speaks to another. This is the way God relates to those who are humble (Num 12:3; Isa 65:2; Jas 4:6–10).

Through Moses' prayers God would restore His presence to Israel. Moses came to God on the basis of God's grace. God had said that Moses found favor in God's sight (Exod 33:12), like Noah had (Gen 6:8) and like Mary would (Luke 1:30). God showed grace to all three individuals and used them to bring about His plan of deliverance. Even as Moses prayed, God was accomplishing Israel's deliverance through Moses' prayer. Moses' prayer for Israel's deliverance reminds us of Jesus who is greater than Moses and intercedes now for His children.

Moses appealed for God's glory to remain with Israel. He knew that unless God went with Israel, they would not be any different than the other nations (33:16). Only God's gracious presence with them could set them apart. God again granted Moses' requests as a demonstration of His grace (33:17).

Moses prayed because He loved God's glory, and his final request reflected his love. He asked to see God's glory (33:18). The LORD agreed, but He would not

THINK ABOUT IT

The holy God of all the earth desires personal interaction with His people.



THINK ABOUT IT

Moses understood that God's purpose for Israel could not be fulfilled without God's presence with Israel.



STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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show Moses His face—His full glory—because this would be too much for any man (33:19–20). No one can see God and live (John 1:18). Even a glimpse of God's glory is overwhelming (Matt 17:6). So God would only show Moses His back (Exod 33:23). This does not literally refer to God's back, since God is spirit (John 4:24). Instead, it means that Moses would see the fading glory that remained after God's full glory had passed by.

The LORD showed Moses His glory (34:1–35)

The next morning, Moses saw God's glory. He took two tablets for the law as God had instructed him and climbed Mt Sinai alone (Exod 34:1–4). The LORD came in a cloud and proclaimed His name: Yahweh (34:5–6). The LORD's name is not just a word. It represents His nature. As the LORD passed by, He proclaimed what He is like: His grace, patience, love, truth, holiness, and justice (Exod 34:6–7; Ps 103:8). God's glory is thus kind and just at the same time.

Moses responded in the only appropriate way: he bowed all the way down to the ground and worshiped (34:8). When He realized just how great God was, He again pleaded for God to forgive Israel (34:9). He was urgent because He had seen the holiness and justice of God's glory. If God did not forgive, His glory in the midst of Israel would destroy them. But Moses was also bold because he had seen the grace and patience and love of God. Only through forgiveness can stiff-necked people be God's own possession.

The LORD again granted Moses' request. He made a covenant to protect Israel from the false worship they had so recently performed. They were to destroy everything in Canaan associated with idolatry (34:11–17), and they were to keep three feasts each year in order to remember the true God (34:18–27).

Finally, after forty days without food or water (34:28; Matt 4:2), Moses came down with the new set of Ten

Commandments. His face shone bright because he had seen God's glory (Exod 34:29). Moses' shining face reminds us how all believers are called to reflect God's glory to the world (Matt 5:16). To calm the people's fear, Moses wore a veil from then on (Exod 34:33). But he would take the veil off when he went to speak with God, and he would keep it off while he spoke God's word to the people (34:34–35). By seeing the brightness of God's glory on Moses' face, the people would learn to fear the word of God that Moses spoke to them.

The LORD's glory came to Israel (40:1–38)

After Moses' vision of God's glory, the LORD told him to begin building the tabernacle. Moses and the people obeyed perfectly, as the passage emphasizes five times (40:19, 21, 25, 29, 32). When the tabernacle was finished, the cloud came over the tabernacle and God's glory filled the tabernacle to such an extent that Moses could not even enter it (34:34–35). God's glory was too much even for Moses to endure. Eventually Moses would be allowed to enter, and God's presence remained among Israel for the rest of their wanderings, fulfilling His promise to dwell among them and be their God.

The glory that Moses saw and that shined on his face was just a glimpse of the glory of God revealed through Jesus Christ (2 Cor 3:16–4:6). Even we do not see God's glory yet in its fullness (1 Cor 13:12), but one day we will. This hope is not for those who continue in unrepentance, because God's glory destroys sinners. This hope is only for those who humbly depend upon the glorious mercy and grace of God available because of Jesus Christ.

THINK ABOUT IT

Just as the moon reflects the light of the sun to the world, believers are to reflect the light of the Son of God to a lost and dying world.



Lesson Outline

God dwells among His people with great glory.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. The people were sad because the LORD said He would not live with the people (33:1–6).
2. Moses prayed for the LORD to come live with the people (33:7–23).
3. Moses saw how glorious the LORD is (34:1–35).
4. The LORD came to live in the tabernacle, and it was full of His glory (40:1–38).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. The LORD kept His glory away from the sinful people (33:1–6).
 - His presence would not go up with the people (33:1–3).
 - The people mourned and took off their ornaments (31:4–6).
 - Moses prayed on the basis of God's favor, promises, and glory (33:7–23).
 - Moses regularly met with God, and God spoke with him clearly (33:7–11).
 - Moses asked for God's guidance (33:12–13).
 - Moses asked for God's presence (33:14–16).
 - Moses asked to see God's glory (33:17–23).
2. The LORD showed Moses His glory (34:1–35).
 - The LORD proclaimed His compassion, grace, patience, love, truth, holiness, and justice (34:1–7).
 - Moses bowed low and worshiped (34:8).
 - Moses prayed that God would forgive Israel's sins and make Israel His own (34:9).
 - The LORD made a covenant to protect Israel's true worship from idolatry (34:10–27).
 - Moses' face shone because of God's glory (34:28–35).
3. The LORD's glory came to Israel (40:1–38).
 - Moses and the people built the tabernacle just as God had commanded (40:1–33).
 - A cloud came over the tabernacle (40:34–38).
 - The glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle (40:34–35).

TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. Why were the people sad?**
God did not stay with them because of their sin. The tent of meeting was moved far away from the people.
- 2. What did Moses ask for?**
Moses asked for God to come and stay with Israel and lead them. He also asked to see God's glory.
- 3. After Moses saw God's glory, what was Moses' face like?**
It was shining.
- 4. After the people built the tabernacle just like God said, what did God do?**
He came into the tabernacle and filled it with His glory. He stayed among the people.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. Why did God choose not to stay among the people?**
He said that He is so holy He might completely destroy them because of their sin.
- 2. Where did Moses pitch the tent of meeting?**
He put it far outside the camp, showing that God would not stay close to sinful people.
- 3. What did Moses ask God for?**
Moses asked for God to help him lead Israel, to come stay with Israel, and to show him His glory.
- 4. What three reasons did Moses give for God to do these things?**
Moses prayed for these things because of God's promises, grace, and glory. God had promised that Israel was His people, God had chosen to show favor to Moses, and God's glory would not be displayed if Israel moved on without God.
- 5. How did God describe His glory to Moses?**
He described Himself as "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."
- 6. What did Moses do when he saw a glimpse of God's glory?**
He bowed down to the ground and worshiped, and he prayed that God would forgive Israel's sin.
- 7. When Moses and the people built the tabernacle, did they do it the way God said?**
Yes, they obeyed God exactly, showing that Israel had repented.
- 8. What did God do after the tabernacle was finished?**
He came into the tabernacle with great glory. He came to live among the people.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

God's goodness and His name signify who He is. Help the children write and decorate their own names. Here are some ideas:

1. Before class, print each child's name in block letters so that he can color and decorate inside each letter.
2. Bring parchment paper and markers. Let the children practice, and then write out their full names.
3. Bring in a book that gives the origin and definition of names. Look up children's names and write out their meanings. This would be a good opportunity to discuss God's characteristics, which make up who He is.

BUILD THE TABERNACLE

This is the place where God sent His special presence. It needs to be very, very beautiful. Bring in three or four 12-foot sheets of butcher paper. Lay them on the floor and ask the children to make their prettiest pictures of angels on them. Once the sheets of paper are decorated, drape the pieces facedown over a rectangular table, and tape them to the floor. The beautiful pictures of the angels were on the inside of the tabernacle. This was where God was going to be. Use the tabernacle as you tell the story.



ILLUSTRATE

GLOWING ITEM

Bring a toy, shirt, or any item you have that will glow in the dark after being exposed to light. Show the children how the item works by exposing it to bright light and then taking it to an area where there is as little light as possible. Tell the children that after Moses spent 40 days on the mountain talking with God his face was glowing with the glory of God, and the people were afraid to come near him.

HIDDEN IN A ROCK

Bring in a large rock to class and tell the children that God hid Moses in a rock to protect him from God's glory. Explain that Moses wanted to see God's glory, but God told Moses that no man could see His face and live (Exod 33:20). But God did let Moses see the back of His glory. However, before showing Moses His glory, God placed Moses in the cleft of a rock to protect him from His glory. Use this as an opportunity to talk about God's holiness and man's sinfulness.



APPLY

GOD APPEARS IN THE CLOUD AND FIRE

See *Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1*.

Materials: Craft sheet, cotton balls, red tissue paper, black and blue construction paper, white and yellow paper, crayons, scissors, and glue.

Directions: Pre-cut two pictures of the tabernacle and two verses from the craft sheet. Pre-cut a moon and a sun. Have students glue a sheet of black construction paper to a sheet of blue construction paper. On the black side glue the tabernacle picture and verse along with the moon and a pillar of fire made from pieces of red tissue paper that are twisted with the eraser end of a pencil. On the blue side glue the other tabernacle picture and verse along with the sun and a pillar of cloud made of cotton balls.

God Appears in the Cloud and Fire
See *Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1*.



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

THE BRIGHTNESS OF GOD'S GLORY

To help the children understand the intensity of God's glory, give them the example of the sun. We cannot (and should not) look into the sun without it hurting our eyes. Have the children brainstorm for some objects that they need to protect them from the sun. Tell the children that God's glory is much more intense, more consuming, and even brighter than the sun! Ultimately, we are protected from God's holiness and can only behold His glory by being in Christ.

SHATTERED TEN COMMANDMENTS PUZZLE, PART 1

Before class, draw two tablets on butcher paper and write the Ten Commandments on them. Cut the tablets into puzzle pieces. Before the lesson, hand out the puzzle pieces to various children. In the previous lesson Moses broke the Ten Commandments after he learned of Israel's idolatry. Ask the children to piece the tablets of the Ten Commandments back together. Tape the reassembled tablets to the board, and use them to review the ten instructions God had given Israel. Explain that in today's lesson God instructs Moses to cut two more tablets of stone like the first ones so he could rewrite the Ten Commandments (Ex. 34:28).



ILLUSTRATE

OIL (HOLINESS) AND WATER (SIN)

Bring to class a clear container, vegetable oil, water, and stirring spoon. Tell the children that God's holiness cannot mix with sin. Demonstrate this by pouring the oil into the water. Point out that the oil and water do not mix together. Emphasize this by trying to mix the oil and water together with a spoon (the oil separates from the water after being stirred). Tell the children that just like the oil and water, God's holiness cannot be combined with sin. But unlike the oil and water, God's holiness cannot even be near sin. In fact, God is so opposed to sin that it is dangerous for sinners to be near Him (Exod 33:3).

SHATTERED TEN COMMANDMENTS PUZZLE, PART 2

Use the Ten Commandments tablets (used in "Shattered Ten Commandments Puzzle") as a visual aid in your lesson to illustrate Moses coming down the mountain with a new set of commandments to replace the ones he shattered after seeing Israel's idolatry with the golden calf.



APPLY

TWO-SIDED TABERNACLE

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, red tissue paper, cotton balls, tan and brown construction paper, white cardstock.

Directions: Pre-cut verses from craft sheet. Have children form a tabernacle by folding a brown sheet of construction paper as shown below. Cut to fit and glue the bases of the tabernacle to the tan construction paper. Roll a half sheet of cardstock into a cylinder and tape it together. Glue cotton on one side to represent the pillar of cloud and glue red tissue paper (twisted with the eraser end of a pencil) on the other side to represent the pillar of fire. Glue the cylinder to the tan construction paper. Glue the verse to the tabernacle as pictured below.



*Two-Sided Tabernacle
See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.*

AGES 9–11

**INTRODUCE****DESCRIBING GOD**

In order for Moses to know who God was, God described His characteristics. Describe a few simple objects to the children, and have them guess what they are. For example: “I am round, you can kick or throw me, and I am about the size of your head. What am I?” A soccer ball. Show them a soccer ball and explain that they knew what it was from your description of its characteristics. In the same way, although we cannot see God, we can know who God is by how He described Himself. Other ideas include a blanket, an apple, and a bicycle.

PITCH A TENT, PART 1

Bring a camping tent to class. Ask child volunteers to help you follow the directions to set up the tent properly in preparation for the coming of the Lord. Tell the children that after Moses’ vision of God’s glory, the LORD told him to begin building the tabernacle. Moses and the people obeyed perfectly, as the passage emphasizes five times (40:19, 21, 25, 29, 32).

**ILLUSTRATE****INTENSITY OF THE SUN
(MADE BY GOD)**

Tell the children that even though it takes about 8 minutes for the sun’s heat and light to travel to the earth (the sun is about 93 million miles from Earth), we still must take precautions to protect us from the sun’s rays (hats, sunscreen, sun glasses, etc.). Yet, God’s glory is much more intense, more consuming, and even brighter than the sun! Ultimately, we are protected from God’s holiness and can only behold His glory by being in Christ.

PITCH A TENT, PART 2

Use the tent (mentioned in “Pitch a Tent, Part 1”) when teaching about Moses’ encounter with God outside the camp in Exodus 33:7–11. Cover your face with a veil when you come out of the tent to demonstrate how the face of Moses shone because of God’s glory in Exodus 34:29–35.

**APPLY****THE COMMANDMENT RACE**

Give each child copies of the Ten Commandments that have been cut into strips and held together with a paper clip (this activity could also be done in groups). These should not be in order. When you say “go,” the children can remove the paper clip and race to put their commandments in order. The first to arrange them correctly is the winner.