

EXODUS 34:27-35 (THE REFULGENCY OF THE LORD)

Some years ago, I was reading this passage and it made me think of the words, “the refulgency of God.” The word “refulgent” isn’t very common. It simply means “shining radiantly” or “resplendent.” Thus, the “refulgency of God” would be the shining radiance or resplendent glory of God.

Being the odd soul that I am, I decided that instead of “refulgency,” I would modify the word to “Refulgent C.” From there, I made a meme with a marvelous, burning C on it, and put on it the title, “The Refulgent C of God.” Do you know that not one person on Facebook got my pun? I was crushed. That was the end of my meme making days...

In today’s account, and taken together with the rest of Scripture, we will logically see hints of the Trinity. We will also see the temporary nature of the Old Covenant, and how that Old Covenant is actually a hindrance to a right standing with God.

This is one of those passages that seems almost obscure and even quaint when quickly passed over, but what it reveals to us is as important to New Testament theology as almost any other passage we will come across.

Text Verse: “So she took off her widow’s garments, covered *herself* with a veil and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place which *was* on the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given to him as a wife.”
Genesis 38:14

Judah’s daughter-in-law covered herself in a veil in order to hide who she was from him. Moses covered his face in a veil as well. What are we being told in

these passages? Well, if you listened to and remember the account from Genesis 38, you may already be partially aware of what today's passage is showing us.

If not, sit tight, pay attention, enjoy what God has set before you, and know that He is unveiling His truth to those who are willing to accept what He has done through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. One theme which resounds, time and again, in the pages of the Bible is "DOCTRINE MATTERS!"

How much does it matter to you? To some, clinging to the Law of Moses is where their hope lies. For those, today's passage should be a wake-up call. It is time to put behind us works of the law. It is time to come to Christ. For those who have trusted in the finished work of Christ, today's passage is a reaffirmation that you are on the right road, the advantageous avenue, the perfect parkway, and the street of salvation.

Be pleased to know that God has accepted you because you have received Jesus. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. He was there with the Lord (verses 27 & 28)

²⁷ Then the LORD said to Moses,

These words are a continuation of what began in verse 1. The entire chapter is interconnected and is revealing the concept of the on-going nature of the covenant which is made between the Lord and Israel. This on-going nature of the account is evidenced in the next words...

27 (con't) **“Write these words,**

The command to write is not based on what follows, but what he has just said in verses 10-26. As was noted last week, the Lord isn't reinstating the original covenant. Nor is a “new covenant” being made. Rather, this is a constant and continuous establishment of a covenant to the people.

Because of this, the entire time of His dealing with Israel is a transitional phase which will be in anticipation of a New Covenant. It is for this reason that the words of the prophets are considered as a part of the covenant. When the Lord spoke through Isaiah, for example, it was to be considered a part of the covenant.

He would deal with Israel in a unique way which was in anticipation of a coming New Covenant. This was shown to be true last week when citing the words of Jeremiah 31 where a New Covenant was promised. As Jeremiah was speaking under the Old, it means that the entire working of the Lord with Israel was a part of a much greater plan which was to come.

The word of the Lord through Jeremiah pointed back to the covenant which was broken by Israel after being brought out of Egypt by the Lord, and yet it anticipated a New Covenant at some future point. And nothing shows us this more clearly than the words of Deuteronomy 18:15-18 –

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, ¹⁶ according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.’

¹⁷ “And the LORD said to me: ‘What they have spoken is good. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.”

This “Prophet” mentioned by Moses is none other than the anticipated Messiah. In John 1:21, the people wondered if John the Baptist was this coming Prophet. He told them he was not. As this Prophet, meaning Christ Jesus, was to have the words of the Lord in His mouth, then it shows that His words were to be a part of this on-going covenant. As He declared that the covenant was fulfilled in Him, and simultaneously He declared the initiation of a New Covenant, we see that the entire Old Covenant was both on-going and yet limited in its duration. It ended with Christ’s shed blood.

27 (con’t) for according to the tenor of these words

ki pi ha’devarim ha’elleh - “for as to the mouth the words these.” In other words, as the words were spoken to Moses, so He was to write. This shows us that the Lord is the ultimate Author of Scripture. When the Holy Spirit moved upon the prophets, it was according to the word, or mouth, of the Lord.

This is seen countless times in the Bible. A prophet would say, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel...” or some other similar statement. At times, it was the Lord who spoke directly to the prophet, at other times, the prophet spoke under inspiration of the Spirit. But at all times, it is the word of the Lord which defines Scripture. For this reason we can rightly say that Jesus is both the Author and the Subject of all inspired Scripture. He even hinted at this in the giving of the New Testament –

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.” John 16:13-15

And yet, Jesus claimed that the words He spoke were not under His own authority, but those of the Father who dwells in Him –

“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. ¹¹ Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.” John 14:10, 11

Thus, we come to understand more fully His words to the disciples, “I and My Father are one.” The work of the Trinity is fully revealed in the giving of the word of God, the Holy Bible, to us. It is this same Lord who thus says now to Moses...

²⁷ (con’t) **I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”**

As the Lord made the covenant, and as He fulfilled the covenant in Himself, and as He initiated the New Covenant in His blood, then we can see the on-going nature of this Old Covenant until the time of its ending. It is all about Christ. It is all about what He determines for those He elects. As this point in history, the covenant is with Moses and Israel.

²⁸ **So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights;**

The interval of time is repeated from Moses’ previous ascent up the mountain. It seems as if a period of forty days and forty nights is excessive for what little information we have been given here, but Deuteronomy 9:18-20 explains the state of things. Moses spent much of this time interceding for the people who had sinned –

“And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. ¹⁹ For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me at that time also. ²⁰ And the LORD was very angry with Aaron *and* would have destroyed him; so I prayed for Aaron also at the same time.”

It would be good at this time to reiterate the meaning of the number forty as defined by Bullinger. He says it is associated...

“...with a period of *probation, trial, and chastisement*—(not *judgment*, like the number 9, which stands in connection with the punishment of enemies, but the chastisement of sons, and of a covenant people). It is the product of 5 and 8, and points to the action of *grace* (5), leading to and ending in *revival* and *renewal* (8). This is certainly the case where *forty* relates to a period of evident *probation*. But where it relates to *enlarged dominion*, or to *renewed or extended rule*, then it does so in virtue of its factors 4 and 10, and in harmony with their signification.”

In fact, both of Bullinger’s significations of the number forty apply here. Moses’ time on the mountain is both a time of evident probation, and it is also a time of renewed and extended rule. The time period was certainly repeated as a test of the people below.

They had failed the first time during his absence; now they were being tested and refined through his second absence. But further, it is a time of renewing and extending the original covenant. It is really an astonishing thing how the numbers of Scripture so perfectly and continually match what is occurring in each account.

28 (con't) **he neither ate bread nor drank water.**

There are three people who are mentioned as having fasted for this time period in Scripture. The first is Moses who did it twice. In 1 Kings 19:8, Elijah is said to have fasted forty days and forty nights as he traveled to this very same mountain. And finally, Jesus is said to have fasted this same time period in Matthew 4:2. It seems improbable that someone could survive this amount of time without bread and water, but the reason for it is given explicitly in Matthew 4:4 during Jesus' trial –

“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” Matthew 4:4

There Jesus cites the words of Deuteronomy 8 which speak of the Manna which was given to the people –

“And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you *and* test you, to know what *was* in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. ³ So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.” Deuteronomy 8:2, 3

But Moses had no Manna, and so how can the two be reconciled? The answer is found in John 6 –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰ This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread which came down from heaven.

If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” John 6:48-51

The Manna only pointed to Christ. Thus it is not at all improbable that these men were able to endure forty days and forty nights without food or drink. Christ is the true Manna and He was able to sustain Moses and Elijah, just as He was able to sustain Himself – relying solely on the providence of God for nourishment.

²⁸ (con’t) **And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.**

Although this appears to be speaking of Moses because he has been mentioned several times in repetition, the NKJV rightly translates this verse with a capital H on “He.” This clause is speaking not of Moses, but of the Lord. This is confirmed in the words of Deuteronomy 10:3-5 –

“So I made an ark of acacia wood, hewed two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand. ⁴ And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the LORD had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me. ⁵ Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, just as the LORD commanded me.”

Though the second set of tablets was made by Moses, the writing on them was still the work of the Lord. The purity of the word of God is evidenced in these marvelous verses in a most wonderful way. God has allowed us to transmit and carry His word, but it is still the word of the Lord.

There are notable contrasts between this forty day period, and that of Matthew 4. Here, Moses receives the word from the Lord on the high mountain. In Matthew, there is the same Lord protecting and defending this same word in the wilderness. In this, fallen Moses had asked for a divine revelation of the Lord. In Matthew 4, the Lord was tempted by the one who caused man to fall, Satan. In this, the Law is spoken in anticipation of it being adhered to. In Matthew, the Law is adhered to in anticipation of it being fulfilled. In this, the tablets foreshadow Christ, coming from Man, but embodying the law given by the Lord. In Christ is the Man who is the Lord and who embodies this same law.

There is more than just a quaint account of Moses and the Lord here. In this, there is the Lord giving us one picture after another of what He intended to do, which led to what He did, and which continues to be reflected in what He does for each person who comes to Him by faith.

*The word of God, glorious and pure
Has been given to us; a perfect gift
Its contents are truthful, steady and sure
There to provide our souls with a lift
When we are low, in a time of great need
We can go to this marvelous, perfect gift
And before we know it, even with great speed
Our souls have been given a blessed lift
Let us hold fast to this word which has been given to us
Let us never take for granted this marvelous gift
It is what refreshes our lives as it tells us of Jesus
And so it is exactly what we need to give our souls a lift*

II. That Which is Glorious (verses 29-35)

²⁹ Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain),

This is similar to Exodus 32:15. Both times, it is careful to note that the tablets were in the hand of Moses. The same is true in verse 4 when he ascended the mountain. The tablets were carefully noted as being in his hands there as well.

As the tablets are the means by which God's word is put on display, it begs an obvious question of us. Do we have the same care for God's word as He does? Each reference to the word of God in the word of God is noted as something which we are to be aware of, to tend to, to safeguard, and to hold in the highest of esteem.

Is this how we treat this same word which we have now been entrusted with? In the Bible, the term "in hand" has a similar meaning as in English. It refers to having possession of something and to have charge over its care. Is this attitude which we display towards this treasure of infinite value?

^{29 (con't)} that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.

The translation here says, "the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him." This is not the sense of what is written. Rather, it says, "the skin of his face shone *through* his talking with Him." It was in the conversation with the Lord that his face was made to shine, and it continued to shine even afterwards.

A new word is introduced into the Bible here, *qaran*. It is a verb translated as “shone.” It is used just four times in the Bible, three times in this chapter when speaking of the shining face of Moses, and once in the 69th Psalm, where it is translated as “horns” –

“*This* also shall please the LORD better than an ox *or* bull,
Which has **horns** and hooves.” Psalm 69:31

Qaran comes from the noun *qeren* which means “horns.” Therefore, some translations say that Moses had horns –

“And when Moses came down from the mount Sinai, he held the two tables of the testimony, and he knew not that his face was horned from the conversation of the Lord.” Douay-Rheims

From these older translations, such as the Latin Vulgate and others, depictions have been made of him having actual horns, like those of a ram, but this is not the intent of the verse. Rather, the light which shone off of him was so brilliant that it emitted out rays of light just like the horns of an animal emit out of its head.

If we compare this descent down the mountain with the previous one, there are some important contrasts to note. In the first, he was filled with righteous anger for the Lord; now he is filled with the glory of the Lord. Then he came to a people swimming in idolatry, unafraid of the Lord; here he returns to people who are literally afraid of the glory of the Lord. In the first, Moses destroyed the tablets of the Testimony; here he will have them carefully deposited in the Ark of the Covenant.

The two accounts contrast, and yet they confirm the work of Christ which is pictured in the second descent, over the failings of Adam which is pictured in the

first descent. In Adam, there is enmity with God, a violation of His law, and no fear of who He is. From that came resulting death. In Christ, there is fellowship with God, faithful satisfaction of His law, and a reverent fear of who He is. And from that comes life. None of this is by random chance.

Again, each detail is given as a set of instructions concerning man, the Lord, the law, and grace. Everything is tied together to show us the superiority of the work of the Lord for us over the failings of Adam, of which we are included.

³⁰ So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.

This is rather similar to that of the moments after the fall of man –

“And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

⁹ Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where *are* you?’

¹⁰ So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.’” Genesis 3:8-10

Adam had been confronted with the knowledge of his sin and he feared the presence of the Lord. Now the people of Israel are being confronted again with the law of the Lord on the tablets, and the glory of the Lord reflected in Moses’ face.

Here, we are told that they saw Moses. There is nothing to suggest that they thought it was anyone but Moses. However, there was a change in him which they did not understand. The light shining off of him meant something, but they couldn’t discern whether it meant good or evil towards them.

The glory of the Lord, even in a secondary manner such as this, combined with the second set of tablet's bearing God's law, seems to have uncovered their sinful state and exposed it to their hearts. No wonder the Lord said in the last chapter that "...no man shall see Me, and live." The very thought of sin-filled man standing in the presence of pure holiness and beholding it with uncovered eyes would mean utter destruction. From Aaron down, there was fear because of the revealed glory of the Lord.

³¹ Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses talked with them.

Like Adam who had hid himself from the Lord, those who saw Moses hid themselves from the glory of the Lord which had rested upon Moses. And like Adam who came forth to speak to the Lord and admit his nakedness, Aaron and the rulers came forward despite their nakedness.

This same type of spiritual encounter will occur again in the future. Christ will come back in His full splendor, and all of the rulers of Israel will fear, but when He calls to them, they will return to Him. When they do, He will speak to them as well. Their nakedness will be covered in His righteousness and the law will be secreted away, once and for all in the true Ark, Christ the Lord. The patterns repeat so that we can see the Lord's hand in each step of the process. As it says in Ecclesiastes 3:15 –

“Whatever exists now has already been, and whatever will be has already been; for God will seek to do again what has occurred in the past.” (NET)

³² Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai.

What this appears to be is a congregational gathering of the people where Moses stood and spoke aloud to all who could hear. Everything that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai, he repeated as commandments for the people. In their own hearing, he spoke to them, exactly as they had requested after the giving of the Ten Commandments –

“You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” Exodus 20:19

Again, like earlier in this chapter, the mount is called Sinai rather than Horeb. When the name Sinai is used, it normally refers to the on-going redemptive workings of God for His people. Such is the case here. The commandments of the Lord were spoken, and now they are being transmitted to the people of God.

Sinai is used once again to bring us the idea of the work of Christ. Sinai means, “Bush of the Thorn.” It is a picture of the work of Christ culminating in the cross of Christ. The law is given and it is a ministry of death, not of life. This is seen in the next words...

³³ And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

The KJV gives the exact opposite rendering of the Hebrew. It states that the veil was on Moses’ face when he spoke to the people, not after. This is incorrect. The NKJV corrected this error.

The people of Israel were given a chance to see the reflected glory of the Lord personally. When Moses spoke to the leaders, and then when he spoke to the people, he did it with an unveiled face. He expounded the law to them and they listened.

However, when he finished speaking with them, he *then* put a veil over his face. The word “veil” is *masveh*. It is introduced into the Bible here, it will be used once in this and each of the next two verses, and it will not be seen again. It comes from an unused root meaning “to cover.”

The glory of the Lord would be covered over and thus it would be concealed from their eyes. They would have the law, but it was a law which veiled the Lord to them. It could not save anyone, and this was never its purpose. Instead, it is a law which has an end. It is this passing away of the law, superseded by the glory of the Lord, which was veiled to Israel.

³⁴ But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out;

There is rich symbolism here. What is in the spot where Moses would go to speak with the Lord? The ark which contained the tablets. This hasn't actually been recorded yet, but it says as much in Deuteronomy 10:5.

This ark, as we have seen, pictures Christ who embodies the law. Within Him is the fulfillment of the law. In this, the veil is removed, but for those who do not know Christ, a covering stands between them and the Lord which obscures who He is and the glory He reveals.

When Moses was in the presence of the Lord, the veil was removed, and it would stay off until he once again came out. During that time, he would receive the law of the Lord which he would then relay to the people as we read next...

³⁴ (con't) and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded.

The law of the Lord was communicated to the people by Moses who alone reflected the glory of the Lord. They would hear the words and they would have a validation that the words were from the Lord by the rays of light shining from Moses' face. After they had received this proof, he would then cover himself, as is seen in our final verse of the day...

***³⁵ And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.**

They would see the glory of the Lord radiating off Moses' face. Thus the authentication of the words of the law would be made. After this, he would then cover his face until he again went in before the Lord. The fact that the law was something temporary and destined to end was veiled from the people.

They took the law as a perpetual covenant, and they still take it this way today. Even some Judaizing sects of Christianity still look at the law in this manner. And thus a veil rests over their eyes. This is explained, in detail, by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3.

*How I love your law, O Lord, it is my meditation day and night
And upon Your law I contemplate with all my mind
But in Your law I find myself in a challenging plight
I find myself in a spot difficult and unkind
I see Your law is perfect, but I am prone to sin
I find a war within myself which rages against my will
What will free me from this body of death? Am I done in?
How can I these evil desires crush? I am fighting with them still
Thanks be to God! I can prevail through the Lord Jesus!
In His cross, I am set free and I am granted new life
What a marvelous God who has done these things for us!
In Jesus I find release from the once raging strife*

III. From Glory to Glory (2 Corinthians 3)

We have to ask ourselves each time we come to a passage like this, “What is the Lord trying to tell us?” Why did He include this remarkable, but otherwise obscure passage concerning the radiant face of Moses? The answer is that He is showing us Christ.

And the best part about it is that we don’t even need to struggle with it to find the answer. Instead of searching mind and searching the word for secret clues, the Lord has revealed the meaning to us. Paul clearly and precisely explains it in 2 Corinthians 3. Take a minute to turn to that page, and we will go over it.

In the previous chapter, Paul spoke of victory in Christ. He then said that the message of the apostles carried "the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing." Expanding on that, he gave a contrast as to how this fragrance is received. He says that, "To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death." In Greek, it reads *ek thanatou eis thanaton* - "from death to death."

The state of the unregenerate is already death. This is because "the wages of sin is death" and "all have sinned." Those who reject the gospel message do so from death to death. There can be no life for someone who is already dead and who has chosen the path of death by rejecting Christ.

For the one who reaches out and receives the fragrant aroma of the gospel message, it is *ek zoes eis zoen* - "from life to life." The Source of life is found in the gospel message which centers on Jesus Christ.

In chapter 3, he told his audience that they were in themselves an epistle of Christ which was "written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart." Here he contrasts the superiority of the gospel of Christ over the Law of Moses. One was written on stone, the other on the heart.

He then went on to say, very exactly, that "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." As I said earlier, the law could save no one, nor was this its intent. Rather, the letter, meaning the law, kills. Only the Spirit can give life. Remember that Paul was a Pharisee. He was trained like few other people in all of Israel. And yet, he came to understand that the law was opposed to salvation.

Despite this, he tells about the magnificence of the law. He said, "But if the ministry of death, (meaning the law) written *and* engraved on stones, (meaning

the Ten Commandments which was the basis of the law) was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away,⁸ how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?"

Here we see the truth that it was the law itself which brought the radiant shine to Moses' face. The pure law of God, given directly by God to Moses, was so splendid that it caused his face to shine, as if he had horns protruding from his face.

The radiation of the glory of God emanated from Moses after he beheld the Divine glory. This was a part of his ministry as the lawgiver to the people. It showed the splendor of what God was doing in the giving, and tending to, of the law through Moses. And yet, Paul's words show that this amazing glory which caused this supernatural emanation of light from the face of Moses "was passing away."

In other words, the law which was given through Moses is being equated with the passing away of the glory of the light emanating from Moses. There would be a time when the law would fade into history, being replaced with something even more glorious.

The law was never intended to be a means to an end. It was a part of the dispensational model of God's interactions with mankind, leading us another step towards the coming of Christ. The reason why, is because the law is reflective of the perfection of Christ. In Christ, the law is fulfilled and thus the Spirit is available to any who come to Him through faith in what He has done.

And so, if the law brought death to man, and yet it radiated with glory, Paul asks, "...how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?"

It is a wonderful, even amazing sentiment! Paul has spoken of the glory of the “ministry of death” (meaning the Law of Moses) which is fading away. In an argument from the lesser to the greater he now basically asks, “If that was so glorious, then how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?”

But Paul doesn’t call it the “ministry of life” as if in contrast to the “ministry of death.” Instead he calls it the “ministry of the Spirit.” This Spirit, meaning the Holy Spirit, is life. And so the contrast is made instead to the physical, tangible stone with carved letters.

Because of the use of "the Spirit" in place of the law, it is speaking of the entire process of the transmission of the gospel - the work at Pentecost, His influence on the apostles to include their work and their writings which are now the New Testament, and then the continued preaching and evaluation of that word. This, and so much more, is the “ministry of the Spirit.”

It is this which is more glorious, and it is this which will reveal glories ahead. This is seen in his use of the Greek preposition *en* which denotes the permanent nature of the glory, and then the verb translated as "will be," which is in the future tense. It shows that what is yet to be revealed contains surpassing glory. Everything about the new surpasses the old, both in the present and in what is yet to be revealed.

In verse 9, Paul then changes the terms. He goes from “the ministry of death” to “the ministry of condemnation,” and from “the ministry of the Spirit” to “the ministry of righteousness.” In other words, the law brought death, and associated with that death is condemnation; it is ineffectual to save anyone.

However, the Spirit brings life, and with that comes righteousness; it is not only sufficient to quicken the spirit to live, but to also grant Christ's righteousness to

the one who is so quickened. The glory of this ministry of righteousness far exceeds the glory of the law. The law faded away, but the work of Christ will endure for all eternity. The glory of Christ will shine upon His redeemed throughout the ages of ages.

In verse 10, Paul compares the two dispensations. The giving of the law at Sinai was glorious. It was glorious in the contents of the law which it revealed. It was glorious in how that law was ministered throughout the time of Israel's life under it as well. And yet, it was a ministry of death. It showed that man cannot fulfill its requirements. Instead, it only brought condemnation. The only thing that spared men from this was a grant of mercy based on the Day of Atonement rituals.

However, the covenant which came through the work of Jesus is a ministry of life. It excels in that where the law brought death, it brings life. Where the law brought condemnation, it brings salvation. Where the law was written on stone, it is written on the hearts.

In Jesus, there is full pardon of sin. In Jesus, there is the sure hope of restoration with God. In Jesus, there is the prospect of eternal life. In all ways, the glory of the law is shown to have only fading glory compared to the work of Jesus on our behalf. Jesus is our Day of Atonement. A one-time and for-all-time glory.

In verse 11, Paul again shows the superlative nature of the grace of God in Christ over the giving of the law. In verse 12, he says that because of the hope of this grace, there is a boldness which was lacking in the law. This is detailed in verse 13 and it explains the obscurity of our passage in Exodus 34 today.

Paul uses the account of the Israelites before Moses as an allegory of the time in which we live. The law is ended in Christ, but the Israelites could not see the end of it. They looked at the law as permanent and as a means to an end. But the law

was intended to lead us to Christ. Because they missed this, they "could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away." And this is exactly what has happened in the dispensational model of history.

But the scholar Hermann Olshausen asks, "How could St Paul say that Moses covered his countenance in order that the Israelites should not behold Christ?" His question seems to imply that it would be wrong for Israel, who was looking for their Messiah, to be denied seeing Christ.

But this question is faulty. They were not denied this actively. Instead, they chose to deny Him. They were offered Christ in Acts 2. From there, and throughout Acts, it shows the truth that Jesus was rejected by them. Paul explains this in Romans 11:25 -

"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in."

God knew in advance that Israel would reject their Messiah, but it served a greater purpose in that the nations received Him and became the called-out Gentile church. Israel was set-aside during this dispensation "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in."

There is a time coming when the Gentiles will have reached their fullness and they will be raptured home to be with the Lord. At that time, the focus will be on the nation of Israel once again. On that day, the veil will be taken away and they will see that Christ is, in fact, the end of the law for all who believe.

Paul explains this in verse 14. He notes that the Jews, and indeed anyone who would follow in the misguided notion about the purpose and continuance of the

Old Testament, is blinded. This blinding of one's eyes indicates a spiritual blindness.

This veil which remains in place is "unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament." Anytime the law is read to a person who is trying to be justified by the law, the veil remains. They have missed Christ and are attempting to seek a right-standing before God based on personal merit. It is a self-condemning act.

Finally in verse 14, the NKJV ends this verse with, "because the *veil* is taken away in Christ." This is not the intent of Paul's words. The word "veil" is inserted; it is not in the Greek. They have incorrectly assumed that it is the veil which is taken away in Christ. But this is properly explained in verse 16. Rather, it speaking of the law itself. In Christ, the law is taken away. Only when one realizes this is the veil then removed. John Darby rightly translates the verse –

"But their thoughts have been darkened, for unto this day the same veil remains in reading the old covenant, unremoved, which in Christ is annulled." Darby

In verse 15, Paul explicitly tells us that when the law of Moses is read by any who are trying to be justified by the law, a veil lies over their heart, just as the veil was placed over Moses' face. And then in verse 16 he shows us something wonderful.

Different translators look at what this verse is saying in different ways. In the NKJV, it says "when one turns to the Lord." It implies that each time a Jew turns to Jesus, the veil is taken away. However, other translations say, "...when it shall turn to the Lord."

This then would be speaking of the heart of Israel collectively. The Weymouth version says this more specifically with the words, "But whenever the heart of the nation shall have returned to the Lord, the veil will be withdrawn."

It is true that individually, as Jews come to the Lord, the veil is taken away. However, the context of the passage is implying the nation as a whole. This is what is pictured in Exodus 34. In verse 31 it said, "Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses talked with them."

The prophetic picture of that passage is that the rulers (who represent the nation) "returned" to Moses. The word drives the analogy which Paul clearly saw and is using for us to see. In verse 17, Paul says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty."

The Lord is the Spirit of biblical interpretation. This is not speaking then of the Holy Spirit but the knowledgeable relationship between what is written in the law and what it is pointing out, which is Christ Jesus.

Finally, Paul closes out with the marvelous words, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

At this time, we are "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord." This happens each time we contemplate the gospel, or now because it is written, search out the New Testament Scriptures. And, in the searching out of Christ in this way, Paul says that we "are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory."

Just as Moses' face reflected the glory of the Lord when he came before the Israelites, so we are being transformed. It is not a physical transformation, but a spiritual one. As we conform to the prescriptions of the New Testament, and as we follow as disciples of Christ, we are being spiritually transformed into that same image; the image of Christ - thus, "from glory to glory." We behold the glory and it transforms us to that glory.

Paul finishes his thought and the chapter with the words, “just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” It is the Spirit who calls, it is the Spirit who seals, and it is the Spirit who sanctifies. As we pursue Christ from glory to glory, the Spirit is accomplishing His role in the process to conform us to the image of God in Christ.

From what is obscure and hidden, to that which is revealed and open, the Bible speaks of Christ. Because of this, I would hope that each one of you would search Him out, read His word, and fellowship intimately with Him and with those He has called – your brothers and sisters in the Lord.

And if by chance you have never taken the blessed opportunity of calling on Christ and being saved from your just due as the object of God’s wrath, please let me tell you what will bring you to become an object of His affection and a recipient of His marvelous grace...

Closing Verse: For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

“The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
²⁷ For this *is* My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins.” Romans 11:25-27

Next Week: Exodus 35:1-19 *When you get your call, don’t be nervous...* (A Call to Service) (97th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

From Glory to Glory

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write these words
For according to the tenor of these words that I say
I have made a covenant with you and with Israel
And these words will direct you in the way

So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights
He neither ate bread nor drank water as well
And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant
The Ten Commandments; God's great law for Israel

Now it was so, when Moses
Came down from Mount Sinai
And the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand
When he came down from the mountain, by and by
That Moses did not know
That the skin of his face shone
While he talked with Him
To him this condition was unknown

So when Aaron and all the children
Of Israel saw Moses, they were filled with fear
Behold, the skin of his face shone

And they were afraid for him to come near
Then Moses called to them
And Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation
Returned to him; and Moses talked with them
Yes, he talked to the rulers of the nation

Afterward all the children of Israel
Came near, and as commandments them he gave
All that the LORD had spoken with him
On Mount Sinai, directions for how they were to behave
And when Moses had finished speaking with them in that place
It was then that he put a veil on his face

But whenever Moses went in before the LORD
To speak with Him, he would take the veil off –
...as the situation demanded
Until he came out; and he would come out and speak
To the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded
And whenever the children of Israel
Saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone
Then Moses would put the veil on his face again
Until he went in to speak with Him; in the tent with Him alone
Lord, you have explained to us in Your word
That it is Jesus who shines forth Your radiant glory

And so we hail Him as our exalted Lord

And we hold fast to this marvelous gospel story

Praises, yes praises to You O Lord our God

Forever we shall praise You as in Your presence we trod

Hallelujah and Amen...