

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

God instructed Moses to make two tables of stone to replace the ones he had broken in his righteous anger. The LORD wanted to inscribe these stones with the same laws He had previously given so that Israel might have a permanent copy of their basic covenant obligations. When Moses reached the top of Mount Sinai for his second forty-day meeting with the LORD, he was given a glorious vision of God's goodness which earlier had been promised to him (33:19). When Israel was once again brought into covenant relationship with the LORD, two very crucial aspects of that covenant were stressed. First, a strong warning against making any covenant with the Canaanites was stressed lest they be drawn into idolatry. Second, they were reminded of several worship responsibilities that He had given them. When Moses completed his meeting on the mount, his face shone with the glory of the LORD. When he reappeared in the camp, it caused so much fear among the Israelites that Moses veiled his face when he talked with them.

The LORD had commanded the people to bring an offering of prescribed materials which would be used in the building of the tabernacle (25:1-8). They responded with such liberality that Moses had to restrain them (36:6). God stirred the hearts of certain individuals and enabled them to take these materials and build the tabernacle. Bezaleel and Aholiab were specially anointed by God for this task and given the skill and technical knowledge to oversee the entire construction project. When all the work was finished, Moses examined it and found it to be just as the LORD had commanded (39:43).

Moses was instructed of the LORD to set up the tabernacle on the first day of the month. This was done and each article of furniture was placed precisely according to God's instruction and was sanctified for its holy purpose. The climax of the entire operation came when the cloud of God's presence descended and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle (40:34). This glorious event demonstrated the LORD'S approval of the tabernacle, but even more than that, His approval of Israel. It came as a token of God's intention to fulfill His covenant promise: to sanctify Israel, to protect Israel, and to safely conduct Israel to the Promised Land (cf. 34:10).

I. Renewal of the Covenant — 34:1-35

A. Restored Tables — 34:1-4

34:1 — "Hew two tables of stone" - It was only right that Moses should remake the tables of stone since it was he that had broken the originals (32:19). While Moses had broken the tables of the covenant, Israel had broken the covenant itself. Consequently, before Israel could be reinstated as the LORD'S covenant people, that covenant had to be renewed.

34:3 — "No man shall come up with you" - Joshua was not even allowed to accompany Moses part way up the mount this time since the LORD'S special self-revelation was reserved for Moses only. The command given here is similar, but even more stringent than that given previously (cf. 19:12, 13).

B. Revealed Glory — 34:5-9

34:6, 7 — We are not told what Moses saw when the LORD passed before him, but no doubt the visual impression was meant to convey the same idea that was communicated verbally in the LORD'S proclamation. Moses had been promised a revelation of God's goodness (33:19). The word for "goodness" implies that this was to be an unveiling of the LORD'S spiritual and ethical nature rather than His beauty. Thus, the verbal and the visual revelations were meant to

complement one another. Language is exhausted in this attempt to convey the manifold nuances of God's grace:

1. **"Merciful"** — The word used here refers to a deep love or compassion usually rooted in some natural bond. Generally it is found in the relationship of a superior to an inferior, or of the strong to the helpless. The choice of this word implies the strong tie which God feels toward those that He calls His children (cf. Ps 103:13).

2. **"Gracious"** — This word in the original is always used of God. In eleven of its thirteen usages in the Old Testament it appears with "merciful." It comes from a root which suggests a favorable disposition toward someone.

3. **"Longsuffering"** — This is translated from two words which literally mean "slow to anger." This attribute of *God* further demonstrates the perversity of Israel's apostasy, since His longsuffering was stirred to great wrath (cf. 32:10, 11).

4. **"Abundant in goodness and truth"** — These two words appear together often in Scripture and seem to define each other in this construction. Another very acceptable translation would be "faithful love." The word "goodness" or "love" comes from a very significant Hebrew word. It is often used for the basis of ethically binding relationships like the covenant between God and Israel. It seems to denote more than just a sense of obligation. Rather, it suggests the deep love which prompts one to enter into a self-imposed obligation. God's love caused Him to enter into covenant with Israel, but His love remained intact even after that covenant was broken by Israel.

5. **"Keeping mercy for thousands"** — The word for mercy is the same word translated "goodness" in the previous phrase. Whereas the former statement revealed the plentitude of God's love, this line expounds the perpetuity of that love. It will keep on being sufficient even though it is expended on thousands of generations. This idea is carefully enunciated in the refrain of Psalm 136 using the same word: "His mercy endures forever." Contrast this with the transient goodness and mercy of Israel (Hosea 4:1; 6:4).

6. **"Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin"** — The LORD'S self-proclamation climaxes at this point. From the human standpoint, this is the most consoling expression of God's mercy since it is prerequisite to all other expressions. Apart from God's pardoning mercy, Israel could never hope to enjoy the gracious provisions of the broken covenant. The three words used here convey the complete concept of sin: (1) wrong doing; (2) open defection from God; (3) deflection in aim of falling short of the mark. David records the blessing of this forgiveness (Ps 32:1, 2).

7. **"Will by no means clear the guilty"** — Literally, it says, "clearing He will not clear." The last two statements in this series reflect the fact that God is a God of justice as well as a God of mercy. Not only does this fact complete the concept of divine mercy, but it serves as a warning to those who may be tempted to presume upon it. David's experience is a classic illustration of this fact. Although his sin was fully pardoned, affliction followed him the rest of his days and taught him the bitter nature of sin.

8. **"Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children"** — See notes on 20:5. This thought is an expansion of the previous statement.

34:8, 9 — The reaction of Moses to this glorious revelation was two-fold. (1) Adoration: knowledge of God is humbling; much knowledge of God is much more humbling; (2) Appropriation: Moses appealed to God on behalf of the people He had called him to represent. He begged God to credit Israel's account with this inexhaustible mercy and restore that undeserving people to covenant favor. This was

a practical application of revelation.

C. Restated Covenant — 34:10-35

1. Preamble to the covenant — 34:10-11

34:10 — "Behold I make a covenant" - With these words, God signals His acceptance of Moses' prayer.

"I will do marvels" — The same Hebrew word was used to describe the plagues God sent upon Egypt (Ex 3:20). This idea is elaborated by the statement that the LORD would do a "terrible thing," literally, a thing that will inspire awe in all who witness it. There always seems to be a two-fold purpose in these wonderful works that God had performed and promised to perform again: they were simultaneously a work of judgment and of salvation.

34:11 — "Observe that which I command you this day" - It was a characteristic of this type of covenant that the obligations of both parties be spelled out. In these opening lines the LORD obligated Himself to protect and preserve Israel, but He also obligated them to fulfill the terms which He would summarize in the contract.

2. Terms of the covenant — 34:12-28

34:12 — Israel was to be a one-covenant nation. They were to especially resist allegiance with or tolerance of those nations which God had placed under the ban. Under the terms of the covenant, any religious compromise would jeopardize their security politically, economically, and in every area.

34:13 — God had declared war on the Canaanites. It would be wholly inconsistent with covenant fellowship for one party to befriend the enemy of the other party. Consequently, Israel's attitude toward Canaan and her idols must be consistent with the LORD's attitude toward them.

34:14 — "The LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." - The covenant Israel made with the LORD was virtually a marriage covenant. Therefore, idolatry was tantamount to adultery. Human passions cannot perfectly represent divine passions, but divine activities are best understood as they coincide with human experience. The fact remains, that God will not tolerate rivals for His affection.

34:18-28 — The balance of the covenant terms enumerated here are repeated from the original covenant (23:10-19; cf. Lev 23:4-44). This covenant is for all practical purposes, one and the same with the previous one. Although it is just a summary, it serves to remind Israel that the basis of their covenantal relationship is one of obedience to God's law.

3. Mediator of the covenant — 34:29-35

It is difficult, especially in Old Testament thought, to comprehend the great privilege that Moses obtained on the mount. As he descended, his countenance radiated the reflected glory of God. Consequently, he was feared by the congregation as a man specially favored of God. Moses never used this privilege for personal advantage, but only for the LORD's glory.

II. Preparation of the Tabernacle — 35:1-40:38

A. Offerings for the Tabernacle — 35:1-36:7

35:5 — "Whosoever is of a willing heart" - Literally, the gift was to be free, spontaneous and liberal. God's work has never been prospered or honored by unwilling, grudging offerings (cf. 2 Cor 9:7)

35:10 — "And every wise hearted among you shall come" - The willing-hearted gifts were to be fashioned by wise-hearted people. Wisdom, in this passage, implied special skill in various kinds of technical work. This skill was sometimes augmented by a special theocratic anointing of the Spirit as in the case of Bezaleel and Aholiab (36:30-35).

36:5 — "The people bring much more than enough" - Another evidence of Israel's repentance was their spontaneous generosity to the work of the LORD.

B. Construction of the Tabernacle — 36:8-39:43

This passage is in great measure a reduplication of the content of chapters 25-31. It is a deliberate repetition which very clearly demonstrates the faithfulness of Moses and Israel in carrying out the LORD's instructions.

C. Erection of the Tabernacle — 40:1-33

40:1-9 — Once the work was completed and approved by Moses, God gave instructions concerning the erection and consecration of the tabernacle. The function, significance, and location of all these furnishings has already been discussed in previous lessons. Imagine the suspense and anticipation connected with this final procedure. Israel was handling the physical apparatus which represented her covenant relationship and was preparing to offer it to the LORD for His final approval. Because it was being presented to the LORD it must be holy. Therefore, Moses was instructed to anoint the tabernacle and each vessel in it with the oil of consecration.

40:10 — Each article was rendered "holy" by this anointing, but the altar of burnt offering was declared to be "most holy." A greater degree of holiness was not ascribed to the brazen altar than to the tabernacle and other vessels. It was "most holy" in the sense that it was the place of imputed holiness (cf. 30:10). Standing in the outer court as it did, it was more accessible to the people than the other vessels and became a national object lesson on holiness.

40:15 — "Their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood" - The idea is that as long as the anointing continued, the priesthood would continue. That priesthood was given to the family of Aaron as a perpetual statute (29:9). A man was not qualified to be a priest simply because he was a Levite and a direct descendant of Aaron, but because of this perpetual anointing which set him apart as holy.

40:17 — "In the first month in the second year" - The erection of the tabernacle takes place one year after the exodus (12:2) and nine months following Israel's arrival at Mount Sinai (19:1). The tabernacle was constructed and initially set up in an area reminiscent of Israel's original covenant, broken covenant, and renewed covenant.

40:18 — "Moses reared up the tabernacle" - Obviously this was not a one-man job, but Moses supervised the overall operation.

D. Filling of the Tabernacle — 40:34-38

40:34 — "Then a cloud covered the tent" - Literally, it should read, "the cloud," i.e., the cloud so often associated with the LORD's presence (13:21, 22; 14:19, 20, 24; 19:9; 24:15-18; 33:9, 10).

"The glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" — When the cloud descended and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle, the fears of Israel were relieved. This was cause for great rejoicing since God was demonstrating by this act His approval of the tabernacle and of the nation of Israel. This filling is often referred to as the Shekinah glory. The term comes from a Hebrew word which means "to sit" or "to dwell." As long as the LORD's

presence dwelt in the tabernacle, Israel could anticipate Divine graciousness (cf. 29:43-46). Since God's glory sanctified the tabernacle, this covenant nation could have no legitimate worship without that Divine presence. For this reason it was a tragic day when the LORD's glory departed from the temple amidst Israel's terrible apostasy (Ezk 9:3; 10:4, 18, 19; 11:22, 23).

40:36-38 — The book of Exodus concludes on a very confident note. The promise of 29:45 is fulfilled with the LORD living in the midst of His covenant people. The LORD's presence provided Israel's sanctification, protection, and direction to the land of promise. Israel is no longer a nondescript body of former Egyptian slaves, but a legitimate nation with the prospect of a great future!