

Biography of Shelly Hollis

I was born in a small Illinois town to Dick and Shirley Seals, baby number five out of seven. All through my childhood, I can remember “church” people offering to come by and pick us up for Sunday School and church. Some of my earliest memories of church include thinking that the preacher was a king because he was wearing a robe and sitting in a really big chair on the stage. I also remember going to a very charismatic church and thinking that if I didn’t whip up some tears, I could not become a member. No matter what my misconceptions were, God still worked through faithful people to bring little old me to His throne. All through the gospels, we read of how people “brought” paralytics, the blind, the demon-possessed, and the sick to Jesus because He was their only hope. Praise God that others “brought” me to Jesus and I realized that He was my only hope as well.

I accepted Christ as a 12 year old at Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in the Henson Springs, AL community during their annual revival. I think the whole church was praying for my mother and me. I was under such conviction, but didn’t go forward at all. Friday evening, Mrs. Stamps (the pastor’s wife) came to me and just asked me personally to accept Christ. My mother and I were saved that night, and later, we were baptized in a cow pond together! I will never forget that feeling of the squishy, muddy bottom of the pond and the warmth of the water as we identified ourselves with Christ in His burial and resurrection!

Of course, I had my ups and downs trying to live the Christian life during my teen years. But now I had a moral compass in the person of the Holy Spirit who convicted me when I got off track. God eventually led me to the Beaverton Free Will Baptist church which in turn led me to my future husband, Timothy Hollis. Tim and I met when the Free Will Baptist churches in the area decided to hold a joint Thanksgiving service. We ended up singing in the joint youth choir. Tim asked me to sing a duet with him; little did I know that we would become a permanent duet!! We have been married for 22 years.

I felt a very strong call on my life to be a teacher and chose science as my area of study. I taught in Pickens County for two years as a junior high science teacher. Tim was offered a job with an environmental consulting company in 1992 and we moved to Florence. At this time, our son Caleb was 3 years old and I was expecting Hannah. After taking a few years off with the children, I went back to teaching at Central High School in Lauderdale County for the next eight years.

God truly blessed my teaching career. I firmly believe that kids learn best when they are “doing” and not “sitting”. So I made my classes very hands-on and student oriented. Along came a statewide initiative called the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI). I took the position of director (through the University of North Alabama) in 2002. The program has grown tremendously. We have trained thousands of teachers and provide hands-on math and science kits free of charge to our participating schools.

So how did I get here? Like I said, I have a very strong calling to teach – not only science – but God’s Word. I currently teach multiple Bible classes for women at my home church, Underwood Baptist in Florence. God has been laying on my heart the significance of clouds

and how they are related to His presence for the past couple of years. So I finally got serious about writing this study. I have found that God's presence, which was manifested externally in the wilderness as the pillar of cloud, eventually comes to dwell within each and every believer of Christ. This study traces that journey and we will discover some wonderful precepts about God's presence. My personal Bible study habits are heavily influenced by Bible teacher, Kay Arthur of Precept Ministries. Inductive Bible study has totally opened my eyes to how to get the most from God's Word.

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Index of Symbols Used in this Study

As you work through “Oh, the Glory...A Study of God’s Presence”, you will be marking key words in scripture texts. This page is a quick reference for you to use.
Reference for symbols: Kay Arthur’s Inductive Study Method

cloud

glory

Mt. Sinai

God
(or any reference to God/LORD)

Ark

mercy seat

veil

idol

abide

Holy Spirit

Jesus
(or Comforter, Helper)

Note: all printed scriptures in this study are from the NAS version.

Introduction

When I was in the 2nd grade, growing up in rural Illinois, I had a teacher who had our class make a “feely” for our craft project. We eagerly held up our cupped hands as the teacher poured plaster of Paris into them. As it dried, it took the shape of every crook and cranny of our hands. Our teacher said that our hands were the only ones that the feely would fit and if we ever felt lonely, we could just hold our feely and talk to it. I proudly painted mine a rainbow of colors with tempera paint and took it home for my whole family to see. Can you tell I was a child in the 70’s??

Even though I grew up in a household with seven children, I often was lonely and I admit to talking to my “feely”. Guess what? I outgrew that feely and was left searching for something else or someone else to comfort me. I would come to know God as my great companion and comforter and soon discovered that He longed to fill the void that no “feely” could. Do you know that God longs for our presence too? It’s true. All through the Bible we see how God is constantly seeking us out. He sought Adam and Eve in the garden. God constantly pursued the children of Israel. He is seeking after us even now by drawing us to Him through the Holy Spirit. We, as God’s children, have His glorious presence abiding within us through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. But from time to time through-out the Bible, God chose to reveal His glory in a magnificent way that we call Shekinah Glory!

The word Shekinah never appears in the Bible so we need to begin with some root knowledge concerning what it means. Shekinah glory is the visible manifestation and presence of God during an extended period of time (from The Shekinah Glory, Miller). Do not be confused - God is present at all times and in all places (omnipresent). But at times, He chooses to make His presence known through unmistakable signs.

Here is a quick word study to show how *Shekinah* was derived. God instructed Moses to build a sanctuary for Him in Exodus 25:8 so that He could “dwell” among them (referring to the children of Israel). The word “dwell” is from the Hebrew word *shakan*, which means to continue to dwell. The word tabernacle also has its roots in this word (*miskan*). The transliterated English word ends up being *Shekinah*. As you will learn in this study, the tabernacle, whether it was just a tent or a more permanent structure, housed the place where God’s presence met with human beings.

Lesson 1: Overview of the Shekinah Glory

Okay, enough word study. What does all of this mean to us? Simply put, God wants – no, longs - to dwell with us and in us. He doesn't want us to turn to any false gods (or even a plaster of Paris feely) to fill the place in our souls that can only be filled with His presence. In this study, we will examine the Shekinah Glory presence of God and its various manifestations throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Let's start by looking at some of the earliest mentions of God's presence in the Bible.

1..God's eternal presence is found in Genesis.

- a. What was God's presence in Spirit form doing in Genesis 1:2?
- b. In Genesis 2:7, from what does God form man?
- c. From these scriptures, do you think God's presence was somewhere up in heaven or do you think His presence came down to Earth?

2.What evidence do you see in Genesis 2:16-24 that God was present with and spoke to Adam and Eve? What evidence do you see concerning God's presence in Genesis 3:8?

3.Why did Adam and Eve try to hide from the presence of God? Examine Genesis 3:6-7.

4.My friends, has there ever been a time in your life when you wanted to flee from the presence of God? What event led you to that place?

I remember when I was a child, probably 5 years old or so, I had done something that I just knew would earn me a spanking from my dad. I decided I would just hide all of his belts in my closet. Unfortunately, he heard the clanking of the belt buckets and caught me in the act! Contrary to what we believe, God is not seeking us for punishment. He is seeking us so He can lead us.

5. Read Psalm 139:7-10:

***7** Where can I go from Your Spirit?*

Or where can I flee from Your presence?

***8** If I ascend to heaven, You are there;*

If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.

***9** If I take the wings of the dawn,*

If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,

***10** Even there Your hand will lead me,*

And Your right hand will lay hold of me

6. Circle the personal pronouns (I, my, me) that the Psalmist David uses in this Psalm. The Bible calls David “a man after God’s own heart”, but we know he was not perfect. David’s adultery with Bathsheba is the sin that comes to mind most quickly. Why do you think David uses I, me, and my?

These verses tell us that there is no place that we can hide from God’s presence. The good news is this – we can no more hide from His presence when we are in sin than we can flee from His loving presence. I love verse ten. It tells us that we serve a “hands-on” God who wants nothing more than to lay hold of us and lead us with His right hand.

It is important to note that God’s presence is shrouded by a couple of different things throughout the Bible. In these instances, His presence is somewhat obscured because mere mortals cannot handle the full glory of God’s presence. We will look at each of these briefly here and then will go more in depth with a couple of them in subsequent lessons.

7. Read each Bible reference and write down how God's presence was manifested or how His presence was obscured in each situation.
- Exodus 3:1-6 – God spoke to Moses from a _____.
 - Exodus 13:21 – God led the children of Israel in the day by a pillar of _____ and at night by a pillar of _____.
 - Exodus 19:18 - Mt. Sinai was all in _____ because the Lord descended in the fire.
 - Exodus 25:8 – God wants the children of Israel to build a _____ so that He may _____ among them.
 - Exodus 40:35-36 – What covered the tent of the meeting (tabernacle) that indicated God's glory had filled it?

 - In Leviticus 16:2, God instructed Aaron not to come into the holy place, which is behind the _____. God said He would appear in the _____ over the _____.
 - In Acts 9:3, Paul saw a _____ that was really the glory and presence of Jesus Christ.
8. From what you have learned in question 7, summarize the ways God made His presence known in visible form or obscured His full glory from us.

God's Appearances to Abraham

Abram (later to be called Abraham) was privileged to experience communication with God in a couple of different ways. Let's look at a couple of passages to see how God communicated with Abram. List the means of communication in the blank.

- Genesis 12:1-4 _____
- Genesis 12:7 _____
- Genesis 15:1 _____
- Genesis 17:1 _____

5. Genesis 22:11 & 15 _____

As you can see, God spoke and appeared to Abram on many occasions. Although there is no specific reference to what form the presence of God took during the times He visited Abram, many scholars do believe it was some form of the Shekinah glory (John Wesley and Matthew Henry to name two).

How blessed Abram was to have intimate communication with the God Almighty – El Shaddai! But Abram is no more blessed than we are today. We too can have intimate communication with God because of the propitious act of Christ Jesus (believe me, we will come back to this fancy word later). As we journey through the various manifestations of God, rejoice that God’s presence can abide within your heart if you have accepted Christ as your savior.

One last thought in our overview of this study. We know that Satan’s ultimate goal is to eternally separate us from God. This all started with the fact that Satan proclaimed that he would ascend higher than God.

*‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.’ Isaiah 14:14*

6. Where does Satan claim he will ascend, and who does he want to be like?

It is so interesting to me that Satan claimed he would ascend above the clouds. Think about what he is saying – “I am going higher than God”!

Lesson 2 The Cloud of His Presence

My science background tells me that clouds are nothing more than a visible mass of condensed water droplets. Clouds are part of the water cycle. Water evaporates from the earth, condenses in the clouds, and falls back as some form of precipitation. There are different kinds of clouds; stratus, cumulus, and cirrus. But nothing we have ever observed would compare to the Shekinah Glory cloud. Many times we associate clouds with times of sadness or a troubled time in our lives. I believe this study will change your perception of clouds.

In the verses below, using a colored pencil, mark the word “cloud” with a blue bubble like this:



1. The first mention of clouds goes back to Genesis 9:13 when God says, “I will set my _____ in the _____, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.”

The cloud again appears to the children of Israel after they left Egyptian bondage under Moses’ leadership. The Children of Israel have already seen God’s power through all of the plagues in Egypt and the first Passover when the death angel passed over all the houses that had the blood of a spotless lamb brushed on the door posts and lintels (Exodus 12). The appearance of this cloud comes after they had escaped from slavery but before the miracle at the Red Sea. Moses was reflecting with the children of Israel about all they had been through so far.

Moses told them to *“remember this day in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery; for by the powerful hand of the LORD brought you out from this place.” Exodus 13:3.*

Until the day we accept Jesus Christ as our savior, we are a bond slave to Satan. He will have us in bondage and we will not even realize until Christ sets us free.

2. How long does the Bible say the Children of Israel stayed in slavery (Ex. 13:40)?

3. Has God brought you out of a place of slavery in your life? What was the Enemy using to keep you in captivity?

Let's examine what Exodus 13:21-22 says about the cloud.

21. The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

22. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

4. What is the purpose of the cloud and the pillar of fire?

5. What does verse 22 say about the permanence of the cloud and the pillar of fire?

Now friends, I want you to think about what that cloud is about to lead them into. There is nothing coincidental about why this sign appeared before them at this particular time. Let's be honest – if we had a leader that was trying to lead us straight through a body of water like the Red Sea, we would think he was crazy! Moses needed his message authenticated somehow. Examine this scripture:

*The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever."
Exodus 19:9*

6. The cloud referred to in this scripture is the one that actually descended upon Mt. Sinai and God spoke out of the cloud. Why did God choose to speak to Moses in this way according to the above verse?

Matthew Henry's Whole Bible Commentary has this to say about Exodus 19:9:

Thus the correspondence was to be first settled by a sensible appearance of the divine glory, which was afterwards to be carried on more silently by the ministry of Moses. In like manner, the Holy Ghost descended visibly upon Christ at his baptism, and all that were present heard God speak to him (Mt. 3:17), that afterwards, without the repetition of such visible tokens, they might believe him.

In those instances Matthew Henry discusses, God proved who He was without a doubt so that people might believe. Specifically in what we are studying, the cloud gave Moses the authority he needed to lead the children of Israel and that they might believe.

Exodus 14 records the story of the parting of the Red Sea. Read the whole chapter. Pay special attention to verses 19-20. Remember to mark the word cloud with a blue bubble.

19. The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them.

*20. So it came **between** the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night.*

7. At the end of verse 19 and the beginning of verse 20, where does the cloud move? Why do you think this location is important?

Are you grasping that? The cloud, God's Shekinah presence, came **between** the camp of Israel and their problem – the fast-approaching Egyptians. God will do that for us too. He will stand between us and our problems and be our shield and our defender! Never underestimate how God can work out problems in your life if you are being directed by His very presence.

8. What is going on in your life right now in which you need God's presence and direction? Pour your heart out to God and ask Him to come between you and your biggest problem.

There are numerous other references in the old testament to the cloud and pillar of fire in the books of Exodus, Numbers, and Psalms just to name a few. The direction that the cloud and pillar of fire gave the children of Israel is very apparent in the following verse:

Whether it was two days or a month or a year that the cloud lingered over the tabernacle, staying above it, the sons of Israel remained camped and did not set out; but when it was lifted, they did set out. Numbers 9:22

9. What was the response of the children of Israel to the movement of the cloud?

Although the children of Israel complained often, they did follow the cloud in obedience no matter how long it lingered in a particular location. At times in our lives it may seem that God is causing us to linger in a tough place a little longer than we would like. I am sure that the children of Israel were ready to move on to the Promised Land, but they had enough sense to follow the presence of God represented by the cloud.

God was teaching the children of Israel some hard lessons as they wandered through the desert. Sometimes we think God has us in a waiting pattern, but it is often to prepare us for what is ahead. During the wait time, stay in God's presence through prayer and His Word. Do not put your life on hold while waiting on God for a response.

10. Does God have you in a holding pattern concerning an issue in your life right now?

11. What has been your response to the waiting?

12. What can you learn from Numbers 9:22 about waiting for God?

Here is an example from my personal experience. I was a high school science teacher for ten years and just felt that it was time for a change. I LOVE to teach but felt the need to use my teaching talent in a new way. I had this desire for about two years before God started visibly moving on my prayer. In the beginning of my restlessness, I was very discouraged and depressed because I wanted immediate action from God – He wasn't moving the cloud fast enough for me!! And believe me, I was grumbling and complaining just like the children of Israel.

My job performance suffered as a result of my depression. After I spent the first year wallowing in depression, God sent some fresh revelation my way. How in the world could He trust me with a new job, when I wasn't doing my current job to the best of my ability and to His glory? So I jumped into my teaching full throttle, did new projects with my students, and tried to have a positive attitude each and every day. Within six months, God lined up a whole new career challenge for me that suited my set of talents much better. Once I resigned to His will and rested in His presence, He honored the desire of my heart.

Ladies, do not look at every cloud as a symbol of oppression or a dark time in your life. God brings clouds into our lives to teach us something. The cloud may come in the form a troubling doctor's report, a time of depression, or some other trial. Through the presence of the cloud, God may be trying to exert His Right hand to guide you as Psalm 139 told us He would do. Trust God and move with Him as He directs the cloud in the way He desires you to move.

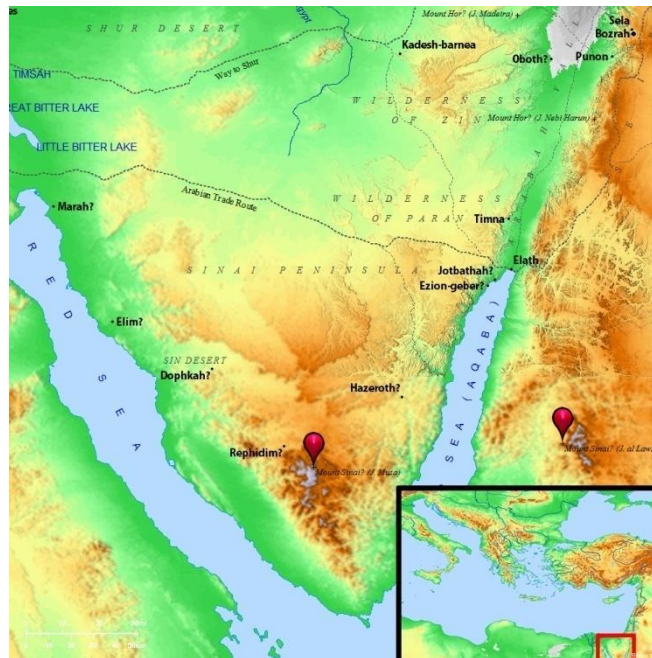
Lesson 3

The Cloud of His Presence on Mt. Sinai

When used in a quoted scripture, mark the word “cloud” with a blue bubble as before and mark the word “mountain” or “Mt. Sinai” and “glory” like this:



As Moses led this group of former slaves through the wilderness, the cloud would descend on Mount Sinai and God would speak to Moses through the cloud. This first happened in the third month of their wilderness journey after their release from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 19:1). Although the exact location of Mt. Sinai is debated by scholars, the map below shows the highest probability of its location.



From Biblecommenter.com

The word Sinai also has a debatable origin. Some scholars believe it comes from the Babylonian word “sinu” for the moon (or to shine). This is appropriate, because at times, Mt. Sinai did seem to glow like fire because of the presence of God (Exodus 24:17). As a matter of fact, Exodus 19 describes the scene as God calls Moses to the mountain and gives him strict orders about how to approach the mountain and how he needs to restrict people from approaching the mountain while His presence is upon it.

Read the following verses from Exodus 19 and try to visualize what this scene must have looked like. Remember to mark the key words of cloud, glory, and mountain.

16. So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

17. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

18. Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently.

19. When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder.

1. In the space below, attempt to illustrate what you are reading about in those verses. Use simple figures (stick figures as people and simple triangle shapes for the mountains). If you are like me, you are not an artist. However, I want you to try to wrap your mind around what is happening as the very presence of God descends on Mt. Sinai.

2. Read Exodus 20:1-17 from your Bible and list the commandments that Moses received from God while He was on the mountain.

It is important for you to realize that the 10 Commandments were not the only laws given on Mt. Sinai. If you continue reading chapters 21-23, you see more detailed laws were given concerning many different topics. However, Deuteronomy 10:4 tells us that only the 10 Commandments were recorded on the stone tablets. In Exodus 24, Moses is called back to the mountain for a holy appointment with God. Read the following passage from Exodus 24, remembering to mark our key words. Also mark LORD, GOD, or any references to God such as “Me” or “I” with a purple triangle like this:

God

12. Now the LORD said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction.”

13. So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.

14. But to the elders he said, “Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them.”

15. Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain.

16. The glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud.

17. And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top.

18. Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

3. What does verse 12 say about the length of time Moses was supposed to stay on the mountain (not a specific number)?

4.What would Moses have missed if he had not waited six days for God to give him further direction?

5.Our impatience often makes us miss the glory of God’s presence. Read the passage below from 1 Samuel 13. In this portion of scripture, Saul was instructed to wait 7 days for Samuel to come and make a proper sacrifice before they went to battle with the Philistines. As you can see, Saul got impatient.

***8** Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him. **9** So Saul said, “Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.” And he offered the burnt offering. **10** As soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him and to greet him. **11** But Samuel said, “What have you done?” And Saul said, “Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, **12** therefore I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.’ So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering.” **13** Samuel said to Saul, “You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. **14** “But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.”*

6.What was the result of Saul’s impatience?

7.Can you think of any other instances in the Bible when someone’s impatience made them jump the gun? What was the result?

8. Let's get personal with this. Has there been a time in your own life when God wasn't "moving the cloud" fast enough and you became impatient? What did you learn from the experience?

In chapter 34, after the children of Israel had fallen back into idol worship (remember the golden calf incident in chapter 32), Moses was called back to Mt. Sinai to receive the law on the stone tablets again. Remember that Moses shattered the first ones because he was so enraged to see everyone worshipping the golden calf as he descended from the mountain. Moses stayed on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights - again. When he came down, Moses' face was literally glowing from being in the Shekinah presence!

It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him...Exodus 34:29

When Moses had finished speaking with them [the children of Israel], he put a veil over his face. Exodus 34:33

Friends, this is what I long for. I want people to know without a doubt that I have been in the presence of God - whose name is Jealous (34:14)! God is jealous for us and wants us to find our being in Him. God's presence was so intense, Moses had to veil his face before the people because they could not withstand the glory! Before the tabernacle was completed, Moses used to pitch a tent called "the tent of the meeting" (at times the tabernacle is referred to as the tent of the meeting). Whenever Moses went in the tent, the cloud would descend to the entrance. There God would "speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend" (33:11).

How would our very countenance change if we abided in God's presence? More importantly, what would change within us that people would know that we had truly been with God? Ladies, we have access to the same power Moses had, but it is living within us! We are the tabernacle and we are filled with the Holy Spirit of God. We live so below our means - God wants us to prosper and lead victorious lives as we abide in His presence.

Lesson 4 The Cloud of His Presence in the Tabernacle

To fully understand God's presence in the tabernacle, we need some understanding of what the tabernacle is, the significance of the Ark of the Covenant, and the purpose of the tabernacle.

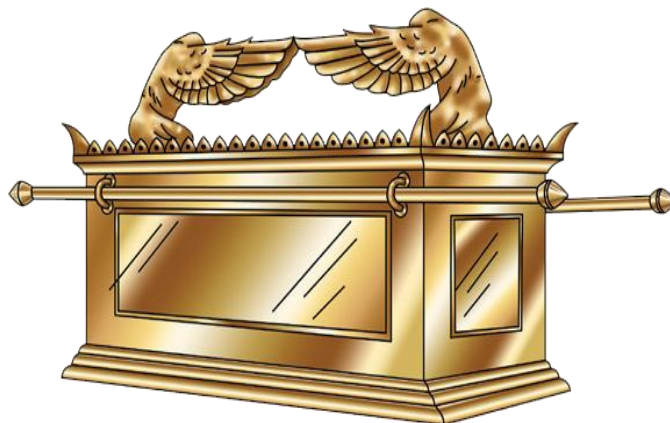
What is the tabernacle (or sanctuary as it is also called)? It was a portable worship center for the children of Israel. When God had them stop in a particular place by bringing the cloud to a stand-still, they would "put up" the tabernacle.

"Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them...Exodus 25:8

1. Why did God desire a sanctuary?

2. The phrase "that I may dwell among them" goes back to our root meaning of Shekinah. Refer back to first page of this study. What Hebrew word refers to dwelling?

Most scholars agree that every piece of furniture in the tabernacle is a picture of the work of Jesus Christ. The most significant piece is the Ark of the Covenant. The first piece of furniture that God instructed Moses to build was the Ark of the Covenant (or Testimony). Read Exodus 25:10-22 for a description of this piece of furniture. Here is an artist's rendition of what the Ark would have looked like:



3. Describe the Ark in words from what you read in Exodus 25:10-22.

Look at these verses from Hebrews that tell us about the contents of the ark of the covenant.

having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail. Hebrews 9:4-5

4. What three things did the Ark contain?

Notice Exodus 25:21-22 in particular. Mark the words Ark and mercy seat like this:

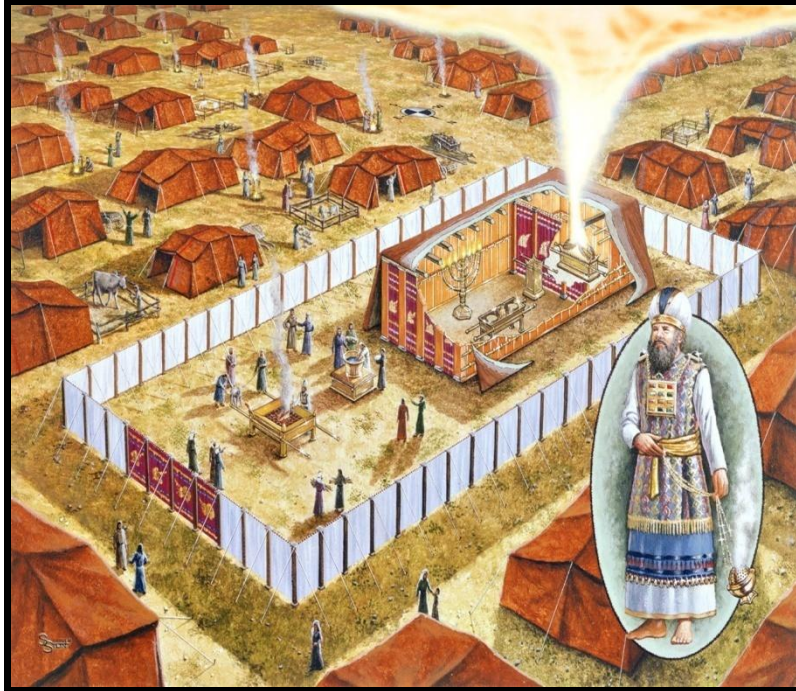
Ark **mercy seat**

21. "You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you.

22. "There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel

5. What did God say He would do at the mercy seat?

I cannot tell you at this time how huge the mercy seat is! In this study, we are going to build up to its significance together. Let's continue to look at where the mercy seat is placed within the tabernacle. Here is a view from above of the tabernacle:



6. In the verses below continue all the markings we have discussed so far and begin marking veil with a purple “v” like this:

veil

33. *“You shall hang up the veil under the clasps, and shall bring in the ark of the testimony there within the veil; and the veil shall serve for you as a partition between the holy place and the holy of holies.*

34. *“You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the holy of holies. Exodus 26:33-34*

7. According to Exodus 26:33, the Ark of the Covenant was covered by something. What was it?

8. Where does verse 34 say the Ark of the Covenant is supposed to be?

We will discuss the significance of the veil in more detail later in this study. Just know for now that only the high priest was to enter through the veil into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement once a year to offer a sin sacrifice for the children of Israel and himself. The priest would sprinkle blood on the

mercy seat as part of the ritual – I cannot wait until we look at the parallels of this with Jesus Christ.

Onto the point of this section though, which is the cloud in the tabernacle. Now that we have a little background information concerning the tabernacle, let's see where the cloud appears.

Let's fast forward to the end of Exodus, chapter 40. After the tabernacle was completely finished, all the furniture was in place, and the sacrifices were made, the Shekinah presence of God came down and met with them there above the mercy seat.

34. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

35. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

9. When the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle, what did it force Moses to do?

10. Think about the other religious tabernacles or temples during this day that were set up for idols. What is the difference between Jehovah's tabernacle and their temples?

Our God is real and He wants to dwell with us. That is the only difference that counts when it comes to Him and all other false gods. The false gods could never express their Shekinah presence, because they did not possess it.

Lesson 5

Moses Asks to See the Glory of God

Moses had such a close relationship with God. As we read in Exodus 33:11, God spoke to Moses as a man speaks to his friend. I want us to examine the rest of chapter 33 more in depth. Why did Moses have such an incredible experience with God? Because he asked for it! God showed how powerful his Shekinah glory is to Moses upon his request. Read the following passage from Exodus 33. It is lengthy, but hang with it and you will see why God spoke to Moses as a friend and revealed His Shekinah presence to him personally. Remember to mark God or any reference to God (I, Me, My, Your, You) to help keep track with this conversation. Questions will be dispersed through this passage for your response. Circle any reference to Moses with a brown circle, including pronouns referring to Moses.

12. Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people!' But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, 'I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.'

13. "Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people."

1. Moses is pouring his heart out to God here, reminding God that He was the one who selected him to lead the children of Israel. They had just gone through the "golden calf" incident and Moses was more than likely feeling discouraged. Summarize what Moses was asking of God.

14. And He said, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest."

15. Then he said to Him, "If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here."

16. "For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?"

17. The LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name."

2. Who is speaking in verse 14? (Note that He is capitalized) What promise is made to Moses?

3. Why do you suppose Moses did not want to leave if God's presence did not go with them (verse 15)?

4. What does Moses say distinguishes the children of Israel from all others on the face of the earth?

This is still true today! We are known by God's presence upon our lives. Without the power and presence of God on our lives, everything we do is useless. People around us ought to see the difference in us because this Shekinah glory –the very glory we have been tracking through the Old Testament - is living within us. There is more to come on this topic later.

18. *Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!"*

5. What is Moses requesting of God in this verse?

Think about the magnitude of this request friends. Moses is asking to see the glory of God. Moses has already spent a good bit of time on Mt. Sinai with God speaking from the cloud. The cloud served to veil, or protect, Moses from the full glory of God, which no human can withstand as we find out in the next verses. Even though Moses had spent many days on the mountain, he longed for MORE of God's presence. Think about the implications this has for us. The more time we spend in God's presence, the more we want His presence!

19. *And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."*

20. *But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"*

21. *Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock;*

22. *and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by.*

23. *"Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."*

6. Moses asked for the glory of God. What did God say He would pass before Moses verse 19?

7. Why couldn't Moses see God's face (or anyone for that matter)?

8. Read verse 21-22 carefully. God tells Moses "there is a place by me". This place was in the cleft of the rock. What does God do for Moses while he is in the cleft of the rock?

God had Moses in a place of protective presence while His glory passed by. He did allow Moses to catch a glimpse of His glory from behind, but not His face.

9. Can you describe a time in your life when God literally put you in His protective presence?

Read this verse from Romans and notice where we can stand today:

[2](#) through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God...Romans 5:2

10. Where can we stand according to this verse?

11. This verse says we "exult" in the hope of the glory of God. What does exult mean?

When Paul says that through Christ we have our introduction (or access) by faith into this grace in which we stand, we can assume that at some point we did not have access. Compare this to the Old Testament sacrifices in the tabernacle. Not everyone had access – only the High Priest had access to the Holy of Holies. But through Christ, we all now have access to this grace. “Grace” (charis in Greek), means that we have found favor and are acceptable to God!

In your definition of exult, you may have found that it means to be extremely joyful or to literally leap upward for joy. It reminds me of an old commercial for the Toyota Corolla car from the 1970’s. A man was so pleased with his purchase he leaped up and shouted “Toyota Corolla”! Paul was happy about this place of grace that we have through Jesus. So many times, we forget just how blessed we are to have access directly to God through the redemptive work of His son. We need to leap for joy every now and then!

When we go through rocky times and we need protection, God will put us in the cleft of the rock and cover us with His protective hand. He will give us a place of grace to stand! Just like the cloud of His presence came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, God will come between us and our problems. He will give us a place to stand by Him and will cover us with His almighty hand in the cleft of the rock!

Moses was experiencing God as no one else during this time because he simply asked. Do not short change yourself friends – we can have this same relationship through Jesus Christ as the Holy Spirit dwells with us. God will show us the power of His glory.

Lesson 6

God displays his power from the Ark of the Covenant

When people approached or transported the Ark of the Covenant, there were very specific rules about how it was to be handled. The book of Exodus documents all this in great detail. Only priests from the tribe of Levi were allowed to enter behind the veil into the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. The ninth chapter of Leviticus records a proper sacrifice and how the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. As you read, remember to mark all of our key words.

***22** Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he stepped down after making the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. **23** Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting. When they came out and blessed the people, the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people.*

***24** Then fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the portions of fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and **fell on their faces**...Leviticus 9:22-25*

1. What was the result of Aaron making a proper sacrifice to God?

2. How was the power of the Shekinah glory demonstrated in verse 24?

3. What was the response of the people?

The power of the Shekinah glory was displayed in a very obvious way with the fire consuming the burnt offering. It was pleasing to God. Let's continue into chapter 10 and see another display of this very same power.

***1** Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. **2** And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.*

***3** Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the LORD spoke, saying,*

'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.'" So Aaron, therefore, kept silent. Leviticus 10:1-3

4. Who are Nadab and Abihu?

5. What displeased God about the fire they were using in verse 1?

6. Read verse 3 again. What do you think is the connection between the strange fire and Nadab and Abihu honoring God?

God displayed the power of His Shekinah glory in another way with these two disrespectful sons. We are not told exactly what the sin of these two brothers was, but we do know they brought fire in their firepans from a source that the LORD had NOT commanded (see Leviticus 6:12). While everyone else was prostrate worshiping God, they rushed into the tabernacle presumptuously to burn incense. It was almost as if they were trying to show how important they were as newly appointed "worship leaders". They should have simply attended to their father Aaron as he performed the duties of the priest.

7. Have you ever noticed any one in the "service of the Lord" that seemed all too anxious to get their own name "out there"? What are some characteristics of a person like this?

This is example of why we need to always choose face down as the people were doing at the end of chapter 9 rather than trying to be the focus of attention. Let's not be presumptuous in our worship and think that we have the "honored" place in the worship service. We need to focus on God and God alone in our worship so His Shekinah glory will appear in our lives as a result of our obedience. We want the power of God's glory, not the power of His judgment on our lives. Above all, we must remember God is holy and must be treated as such.

Lesson 7
The Shekinah Glory Departs
The Ark is Stolen by the Philistines

Because the children of Israel served the one true Jehovah God, they experienced the abiding presence of God in the physical form of the cloud. After the tabernacle was completed under Moses' leadership, God's Shekinah presence would localize over the mercy seat. No other religion could claim the visible manifestation of their gods because they only served idols made with human hands. As a matter of fact, in the book of 1 Samuel, there is great illustration of how powerful our God is in comparison to the idols. It also illustrates what happens when the Shekinah glory departs from Israel for a period.

The Ark of the Covenant had been stolen from Israel by the Philistines. This was a very sad and solemn time for Israel because the very thing that represented the presence of God to them was now in the enemies' hands. As a matter of fact, 1 Samuel 3:1 says that "word from the Lord was rare in those days, and visions were infrequent." The reason it was rare to hear from God was because of the sin of the people as well as the sin of the Priest Eli and his two sons.

Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting...1 Samuel 2:22

1. According to this verse, of what sins were Eli's sons guilty (women who served at the doorway are prostitutes)?

Eli and his sons also were taking some of the meat sacrifices and eating them instead of offering them to God! No wonder a word from God was rare. Here is what Matthew Henry has to say about 1 Samuel 3:1:

There was no open vision, that is, there were none that were publicly known to have visions. Perhaps the impiety and impurity that prevailed in the tabernacle, and no doubt corrupted the whole nation, had provoked God, as a token of his displeasure, to withdraw the Spirit of prophecy, till the decree had gone forth for

the raising up of a more faithful priest, and then, as an earnest of that, this faithful prophet (referring to Samuel) was raised up.

It was under Eli's "leadership" that the Ark was stolen from the children of Israel by the surrounding Philistines. Eli's two sons were killed in the battle. When news came to Eli that the Ark had been stolen, he fell off his seat backwards, broke his neck and died. His pregnant daughter-in-law immediately went into labor and died in the process of giving birth. Look at this verse that tells the name of Phinehas' son:

And she called the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel," because the ark of God was taken and because of her father-in-law and her husband...1 Samuel 4:21

2. What did Phinehas' wife name her child and what is its meaning?
3. Think about the implications of God's glory departing from a nation. What might be some of the repercussions of this?
4. Summarize why God's presence left the children of Israel at this time.

I am sure the Philistines were rejoicing in the capture of this most important symbol of God's presence. In 1 Samuel chapter 5, we read how the Ark was brought to the house of Dagon, a Philistine idol with Babylonian roots. The idol was half man and half fish. Look at the following verses from Samuel that shows what happened when Dagon encountered the presence of the Ark:



Dagon was a major god of the Philistine Pantheon. He was the god of grain and agriculture. ~ From Wikipedia

*2. Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it to the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon. 3. When the Ashdodites arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set him in his place again.4. But when they arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had **fallen on his face** to the ground before the ark of the LORD. And the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. 1 Samuel 5:2-4*

5. According to these verses, what happened to the Dagon god?

I do not mean to be irreverent at all, but this scene just strikes me funny. Don't you know that when the Philistines saw the statue on the ground the first time, they probably thought, "Oh, it's just a coincidence." They pushed Dagon back to his upright position and went about their business. But the second day they found Dagon on the ground **face down**, broken into pieces, they had to rethink the whole situation! Don't miss it – Dagon was in effect, bowing down "before the Ark of the LORD". God will not share the spotlight with any other God, nor will He allow the symbol of His presence to be shamed as a trophy of the Philistines. God, at some point, will have all of us face down before Him in worship, whether by choice in this life, or by sheer submission when we see Him face to face. Let's choose FACE DOWN now! Needless to say, the Ashdodites sent the Ark onto another city! Everywhere it went, the people were stricken with tumors.

David does eventually bring the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem and has a strong desire to build a permanent tabernacle. You may remember the story of Uzzah and how he died because he touched the Ark of the Covenant merely to keep it from falling. When you look at that more closely, you find that the Ark was not being properly transported. Plus, we do not know what was in Uzzah's heart as reached out to steady the Ark. God did know his heart and Uzzah died on the spot.

Because David had such a history of war and bloodshed, God did not allow him to build a sanctuary. Instead, David's son Solomon would have this privilege. I Kings records the building of the Solomon's Temple. After the magnificent temple is completed, Solomon led the procession of the Ark into the temple, sacrificing all the way just as David had done back in 2 Samuel 6.

Look at what happens when the Ark is given its proper place of respect. Mark your key words: cloud, glory, and LORD or God.

10 *It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the LORD, **11** so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. **12** Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud. **13** "I have surely built You a lofty house, A place for Your dwelling forever." 1 Kings 8:10-13.*

6. Where did God say He would dwell?

7. What is the main difference between how Solomon and his assembly approached the Ark of the Covenant and how Nadab and Abihu approached the Ark (refer back to page 25-26 if needed).

Lesson 8
The Glory Departs from Jerusalem – Ezekiel’s Vision
Reference: The Shekinah Glory by George Miller

Ezekiel was a prophet and a contemporary of Daniel. Ezekiel was 18 years old when Daniel and friends were taken into Babylonian captivity. Ezekiel was left behind in Jerusalem where he would serve as a priest beginning at the customary age of 30.

The prophet Ezekiel was shown the Shekinah glory of God in a vision.

*As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I **fell on my face** and heard a voice speaking. Ezekiel 1:28*

1. In Ezekiel’s vision, to what did Ezekiel compare the likeness of the glory of the Lord?

2. How did Ezekiel respond to this vision?

He was privy to things no one else was – God showed him the depravity of the sin of Jerusalem by way of visions – especially idol worship. God will put up with a lot of stuff from His children; however, He has warned us over and over that He will not tolerate idol worship. He is a gracious and merciful God, but He will not tolerate sin forever as we see in Ezekiel.

God is holy and must be treated as such. His presence will not abide in a temple that is over-run with idols. Read these heartbreaking verses and mark any key words we have discussed thus far and mark the word idol with a capital “I” like this:

Idol

***6** And He said to me, “Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations which the house of Israel are committing here, so that I would be far from My sanctuary? But yet you will see still greater abominations.”*

7 Then He brought me to the entrance of the court, and when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall. 8 He said to me, "Son of man, now dig through the wall." So I dug through the wall, and behold, an entrance. 9 And He said to me, "Go in and see the wicked abominations that they are committing here." 10 So I entered and looked, and behold, every form of creeping things and beasts and detestable things, with all the idols of the house of Israel, were carved on the wall all around...Ezekiel 8:6-10

3. Where was Ezekiel when he was looking at these idols?

4. Use a dictionary or go online (biblecommenter.com) and define the word abomination.

5. Where are the walls that are being referred to in verse 10 and with what are they covered?

My goodness, no wonder God was about to pronounce judgment on the city of Jerusalem. They had let the temple become full of all kind of idols. Remember God referred to Himself as Jealous with a capital "J" back in Exodus, meaning that this is one of His names. This will bring sure judgment on the children of Israel. Yes, the gentiles had tons of idols too, but God expects more of His own children. The children of Israel should have known better!

Now let's trace the departure of the Shekinah glory from the temple. God cannot abide where sin is obviously abiding. He begins a slow, reluctant withdrawal of His manifest presence (the cloud above the mercy seat). This does not mean God is not omnipresence. He is and forever will be, but His localized presence between the cherubim and above the mercy seat is being withdrawn.

Then the glory of the God of Israel went up from the cherub on which it had been, to the threshold of the temple Ezekiel 9:3

6.Step 1 of the Shekinah's Departure: Where did the glory of God go?

18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. **19** When the cherubim departed, they lifted their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight with the wheels beside them; and they stood still at the entrance of the east gate of the LORD'S house, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them. Ezekiel 10:18-19

7.Step 2 of the Shekinah's Departure: After leaving the threshold of the temple, where did the glory of God go?

22 Then the cherubim lifted up their wings with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them. **23** The glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood over the mountain which is east of the city...Ezekiel 11:22-23

8.Step 3 of the Shekinah's Departure: After hovering over the east gate of the temple, where did the glory go?

9.What do the words "hovered," "stood," and "stood still" indicate to you concerning the departure of the Shekinah glory?

10. These scriptures are all prophetic of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians. What implications do these scriptures have for the United States?

11.What implications do these scriptures have for you personally?

A quick geography lesson tells us that the mountain which is east of the city of Jerusalem is the Mount of Olives. Tuck this into your memory friends because it is going to thrill you to no end as we continue our Shekinah journey into the New Testament!

J. Vernon McGee summed up these scriptures beautifully:

“The Shekinah presence abode there [in the temple] until the sin and willful disobedience of the people caused Him to withdraw and return to Heaven. The Glory passed over the walls to the Mt. of Olives and rested for one last moment, and we may well imagine that it was with tear-stained eye He consigned that sinful city to the Babylonian captivity. Then quite suddenly He was caught up to Heaven. At some future day the Glory will stand again on the Mt. of Olives not bent on departure but coming again to earth.”

Ezekiel does give us a reason to hope in chapter 43:2-4.

“...the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east...and the glory of the Lord filled the house...”

God had a plan for returning His Shekinah glory to earth. But this time, it would not be veiled in a cloud. This time, it would be veiled in FLESH!

Lesson 9

The Shekinah Returns to Earth Jesus Among Us

Up to this point the Shekinah glory of God has been external and obscured with smoke, a cloud, or a veil. We are about to enter a new part of our study where we first see the Shekinah glory among us and then eventually within us! Let's jump in with both feet and look at what happened at Jesus' birth.

We are all familiar with the birth of Christ so we are going to look at a specific verse where God's glory is manifested. Let's first make a stop in the book of Luke. We are picking up right after Christ is born and the angel appears to the shepherds in the fields at night. Remember to mark the key words we have discussed.

[9](#) And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. Luke 2:9

1. What was the reaction of the shepherds as they stood and watched this heavenly scene unfold before them?

2. The word "shone" is used in this verse to describe the glory of the Lord. Describe what you think this scene looked like.

3. God chose to reveal His glory and the announcement of Christ's birth to lowly shepherds. Why do you think he chose shepherds instead of people of more important significance?

4. Is it out of the realm of possibility that we would ever experience a manifestation of God's glory as these shepherds experienced?

The Gospel of John does not have much to say about the birth of Christ. John set in to prove that Jesus was the Word in flesh and that Jesus was with God from the very beginning (John 1:1). With Jesus' birth, we now have the glory of God dwelling "among us", but not yet in us. Read this verse and mark any of our key words. Begin marking any reference to Jesus (the Word or any personal pronouns referring to Jesus) with a purple cross like this:

Jesus

14 *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14*

5. When "word" is capitalized as it is here, it refers to Jesus. What does this verse say that the word became and did?

6. What do we see through the Word?

This verse says the Word (or Jesus) "dwelt among us". The Greek word for "dwelt" is *skenoō*. That is the closest translation to the Hebrew word *shaken* that scholars can trace. Incidentally, most of the Old Testament is written in Hebrew (and a little Aramaic) while the New Testament was written in Greek. This is the same word that God used back in the Old Testament when He told Moses to build a tabernacle so He could dwell among them. Furthermore, this is the word from which we derive Shekinah! Isn't the Bible's consistency just incredible? It thrills me to no end to see how God has wrapped up concepts like this for us to uncover. This is my idea of a good time girls!! God was literally "tabernacled" in the flesh of Jesus Christ. Our pastor says that God pitched a tent among us at the birth of Jesus.

7. Are we seeing God's full-on glory? What is obscuring its fullness now?

8. What obscured God's full glory in the Old Testament?

Jesus' Transfiguration

We already know from our study of Exodus 33 that no one can handle the full glory of God because of its intensity. Moses asks to see the glory of God but was only allowed to see the back side of God as He passed by. Remember, God had to shield Moses by placing him in the cleft of a rock and covering him with His hand.

In three of the four gospels, a glorious event is described where the veil was lifted slightly for Peter, James, and John. It is called the transfiguration. Let's read the passage and then we will dissect it with some key questions: who, why, what, where, and when.

***1** Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. **2** And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. **3** And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. **4** Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." **5** While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" **6** When the disciples heard this, they **fell face down** to the ground and were terrified. Matthew 17:1-6*

1. Mark all of the key words we have looking for in this study: cloud, Jesus, mountain, God (and any pronouns referring to Him), and glory.
2. Using some kind of aid like a dictionary or lexicon, define what transfigured means.
3. What three disciples did Jesus take up with Him for this glorious event?
4. Take a moment and visualize what this scene would have been like. Describe how Jesus looked during this transfiguration.

I want to make a quick observation about the appearance of Jesus compared with the appearance of Moses after they both had times of transforming fellowship with God Almighty. We know that when Moses came down from Mt. Sinai after forty days, his face was glowing. He could obscure the glow with a thin veil though. Furthermore, it was a fading glory. Matthew 17:2 says that Jesus' face shone like the sun! What a contrast. Moses' face could only reflect the glory of God, and it could be covered with a thin veil. Jesus was shining from within. John 1:4 says "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men."

5. What two biblical characters appear during this transfiguration?

6. Ok, don't go and research this yet – just think about what you already know about Elijah and Moses. What do you know about the deaths of Moses and Elijah? *(If you don't know – don't sweat it – we will get to it!)*

7. What were Jesus, Elijah, and Moses doing?

8. Why do you think Peter wanted to build tabernacles for them?

9. We see a cloud again in this passage. Who was speaking from the cloud and what was said?

10. What was the response of the three disciples upon hearing the voice?

11. Reflecting over what you have learned in this study so far about the Shekinah glory of God appearing to Moses, what similarities do you see in this passage?

Wow! Do you see the similarities of the cloud, the mountain, and God speaking from the cloud? Let's put this scene in context. First, the "when" - you have to go back and read a little from Matthew 16 to put this into a proper context. The transfiguration happened about mid-way through Jesus' ministry. Jesus had started revealing to the disciples that He would have to suffer many things, be killed, and raised the third day. Of course, at this point, the disciples had no understanding of this and were denying that it would happen. It was six days after Jesus had this serious talk with His disciples that He took Peter, James, and John up the mountain.

A quick cross-reference to Luke 9:28 reveals the "why" of Jesus and the three disciples going to the mountain. Jesus wanted to get away from the crowds and pray. There is nothing to suggest that Jesus knew about the transfiguration before ascending the mountain. However, the glory came AS he prayed. Ladies, this is how we will be transformed as well - while we pray and fellowship with God! At this point, it was becoming more real to Jesus concerning all of things He was to face shortly. Imagine the sin-weight of the world on His shoulders - He knows He is the bridge for us to His Heavenly Father.

The "where" (what mountain) is somewhat debatable. Some believe it was the Mount of Olives while others think it may have been Mt. Tabor. Mt. Tabor had a village at the top of the mountain, so it was more than likely not there. The most probable location of the mountain is Mt. Hermon.

Now for the "who" ...who went up with Jesus to pray and who appeared during the transfiguration? We already know that Peter, James, and John went up with Jesus for the purpose of prayer, but why these three? Matthew Henry's commentary suggests it was because they were the favored and most relied upon disciples. Also, the number three was significant in terms of witnesses.

Why did Moses and Elijah appear to Jesus during the transfiguration? I had asked you to write down anything you know about the deaths of these two Old Testament characters. Let's examine this a little more in detail now.

Moses' Death:

4 Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there." **5** So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. **6** And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day. Deuteronomy 34:4-6

Elijah's Death??

9 When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." **10** He said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." **11** As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. 2 Kings 2:9-11

12. What is strange about Moses' death?

13. Who buried Moses?

14. Did Elijah die? How did Elijah end up in heaven?

Wouldn't you love to know what Moses and Elijah were talking about with Jesus? In my mind, I just wonder if they were encouraging Jesus because the sin-weight of the world was upon His shoulders. What an amazing site these three disciples were privy to see. They most definitely had a transforming time of fellowship with the King of Glory as He lifted the veil ever so slightly.

You know, we are also being transformed. It is not quite as stunning as what these three disciples witnessed, but it is happening on a daily basis as we grow in our relationship with Jesus. Paul tells us about it in 2 Corinthians and Romans.

***18** 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 from the Lord, the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18*

***2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2*

15. What do you learn from these two verses about our transformation?

16. In 2 Cor. 3:18, what is it that we are “beholding as in a mirror”? How does it describe our face as we gaze into the mirror?

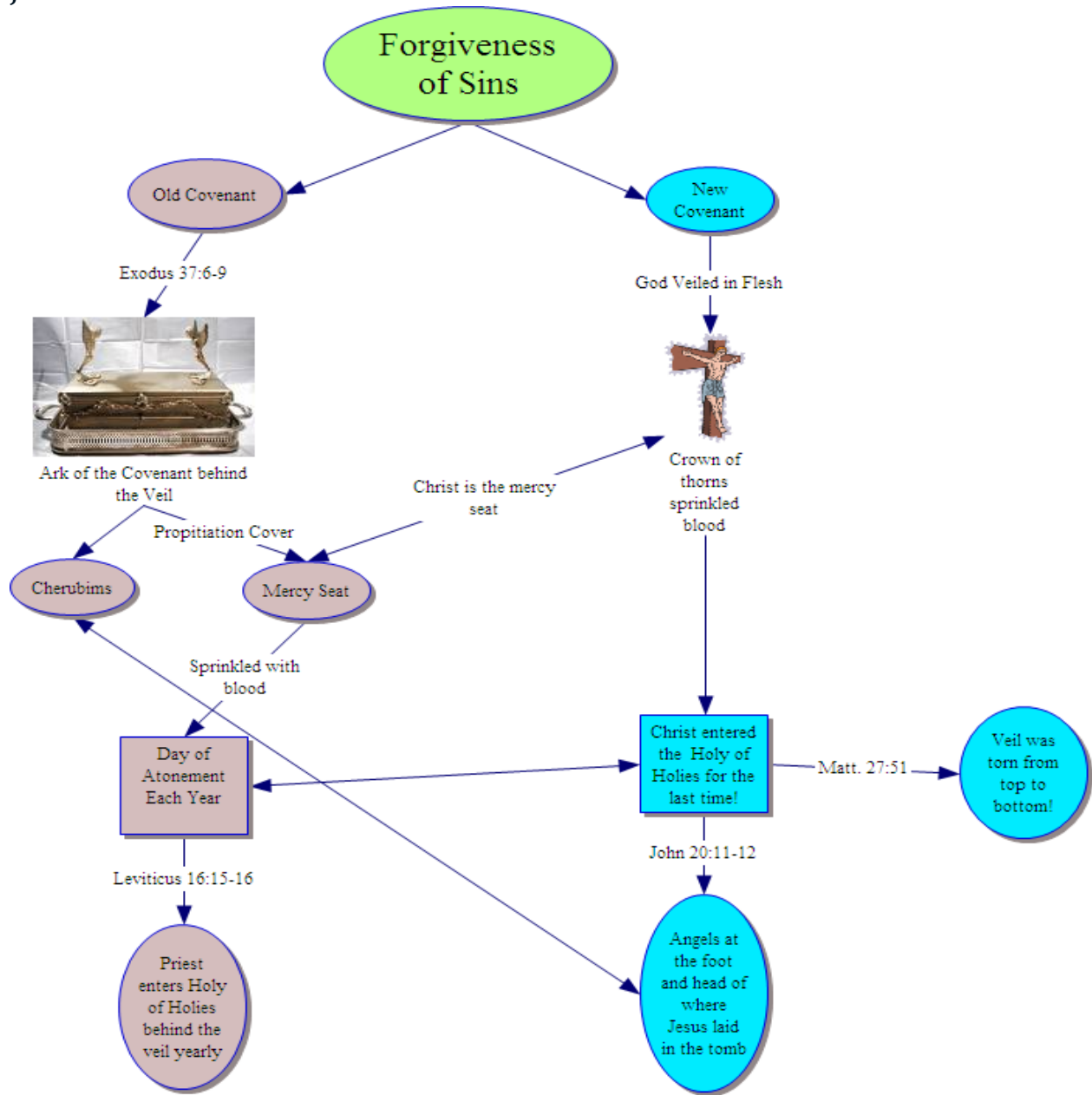
17. What is it that transforms us according to Romans 12:2?

18. What is the “enemy” of transformation according to Romans 12:2?

Lesson 10

The Old and New Covenants in Perfect Harmony

Before the Holy Spirit could indwell us, Jesus would have to suffer a cruel crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. Before we look at the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit makes a dramatic appearance, I want us to examine a few things that happen during the death and resurrection of Christ that will knock your socks off! We will use the inserted chart to guide us through similarities between the Ark of the Covenant and Jesus Christ.



Jesus in Us

I have told you throughout this study that God longs to dwell with us. This is why He told Moses to build the first tabernacle and Solomon the first permanent temple. The great sin of the children of Israel (namely, idolatry) caused God's presence to leave the temple in stages and ascend into heaven. But God had a plan of how He would restore fellowship with us through His own son. We have studied how God's glory was "tabernacled" among us in the person of Jesus Christ. Now let's study how God's glory can dwell within us.

John speaks often of a future helper that will come and abide within us.

The gospel writer John speaks often of God's abiding presence within us. John also sets out to prove the deity of Jesus by recording many of the miracles which he witnessed himself. Here is an example of one passage concerning "abiding" with Christ. Mark the word abide like this:

abide

***4** "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. **5** "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. John 15:4-5*

1. What is Jesus represented as in these verses?
2. What are we represented as in these verses?
3. What can we **not** do if we are not abiding in Jesus?
4. What does the word abide mean? Look it up if needed.

Jesus was such a great teacher. He often used object lessons or stories that brought the message into clear focus for the listener. These verses clearly illustrate that we must abide in Christ to bear fruit. The sap of the vine has to

flow through us (as branches) in order for us to bear fruit. Think of it as a holy IV!

This represents a radical change in the manifestation of God's presence in our lives. No longer is God's presence an external manifestation. He can now abide within the believer. God's abiding presence will be like a sap that runs through our veins. How thrilling it is to know that we have His presence within us.

In John 14, Jesus was speaking to His disciples. He was telling them that soon He would have to go away, alluding to his imminent death. Look at this verse in which Jesus promises a Helper. Mark the word Helper (also Comforter or Holy Spirit) with a purple cloud like this in the remaining verses we study.

comforter

[25](#) "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. [26](#) "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. John 14:25-26

5. Who is the Helper and who will send Him?

Chapter 15 ends with a promise...

[26](#) "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me... John 15:26

6. What kinds of things with the Comforter help us with according to these verses in John 14 and 15?

Friends, this promise of a future Helper (or Comforter/Paraclete) that God will send is in fact the very presence of the Shekinah glory of God that will take up residence within our being! It is the promise of the Holy Spirit. Acts records the miraculous appearance of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. One hundred twenty people had gathered in an upper room in a Jerusalem residence. Acts 1 tells us they were in "one mind" and continually devoted

themselves to prayer. Charles Swindoll says in his book The Greatest Life of All, Jesus, that the Holy Spirit “empowered ordinary people to carry out an extraordinary plan...”

1 *When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.*
2 *And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.* **3** *And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.*
4 *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance...Acts 2:1-4*

7. Why do you think this first manifestation of the Holy Spirit was so dramatic?

There are numerous scriptures supporting the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the tabernacle of our own bodies. Here are a few.

19 *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?* **20** *For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

9 *However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. Romans 8:9*

8. According to 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, what is our body and what are we to do with it?

9. We have seen the word dwell a lot in this study. Look up its meaning in a dictionary or an online lexicon. What does it mean? In light of what you learned about dwell, what does Romans 8:9 have to say about the Spirit of God?

Once we receive the Holy Spirit of God upon being saved, something just as miraculous happens within us as the veil splitting from top to bottom when Jesus was crucified. Look at these joyous verses from 2 Corinthians.

***15** But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; **16** but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. **17** Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. **18** 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 from the Lord, the Spirit...2 Corinthians 3:15-18*

10. What happens to a person when they turn to the Lord?

11. Verse 17 says that there is liberty where the Spirit of the Lord is. The word liberty carries with it the meaning of freedom. What has the Lord given you freedom from since turning to Him?

12. Verse 18 says we are being transformed. Into what are we being transformed?

One day, if we are not among those who are blessed to see Jesus' return, we will all face death. I used to be very afraid of dying – mainly the way I would die. However, the more I study God's Word, I understand that we have to get home somehow. Beth Moore puts it this way. She says the very fact that we long to stay here reveals how much we do not understand about heaven. Look at this verse from 2 Corinthians:

***1** For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 Corinthians 5:1*

13. To what does Paul compare our bodies?

14. What kinds of things can tear down our “earthly tent”?

I just love this verse. When we are ready to cross over from this life to the next, we are just going to fold up our tents and walk into the arms of Jesus. This body – this life – is a cloud. It will dissipate in the blink of an eye and we will be in glory with Jesus.

Lesson 11 The Ascension of Jesus

After Jesus' resurrection, there was a short period of time (40 days, Acts 1:3) that He remained on earth. During this time He appeared to many people, including His disciples and a crowd of over 500 people (1 Cor. 15:6). A group had gathered on **Mount Olive** (Acts 1:12). Jesus told them not to leave Jerusalem until they received what God had promised – the Comforter or the Holy Spirit. After Jesus gave this command, something miraculous happened. Let's go to the first chapter of Acts for the description. Remember to mark your key words.

9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. 11 They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." Acts 1:9-11

1. How did Jesus leave their sight?

2. Do you see any parallels between this passage and what you have learned about the Ark of the Covenant?

3. Do you see any parallels between this passage and what you learned about the resurrection of Jesus?

4. Think back to the passages in Ezekiel that we studied about the departure of the Shekinah glory. Where did the Shekinah move after it left the temple? Why is this significant in light of verse 11?

5. What promise did the two men in white clothing give concerning the Jesus?

These two “men” in white clothing were really angels. I want you to think about how many times we have seen the mention of two angels in this study. We saw two angels (cherubim) overshadowing the mercy seat, two angels were in Jesus’ tomb overlooking where Jesus lay, and now we see two angels at the ascension of Jesus to heaven. I do not think this is coincidental!

Lesson 12

The Return of Jesus in the Clouds

I have a confession to make friends. All other parts of this study have just flown from my finger tips. God had mapped out a lot of things in my head over the past two years as I have thought about the cloud imagery in the Bible. This part – the part of Jesus’ return – has had me on “pause” for about month. Every time I sat down to work on it, God let me know that I was not ready for it. I needed more study and prayer time. I also think part of my inhibition is the fact that brilliant scholars cannot come to full agreement on everything concerning the return of Christ.

With this in mind, I will not be getting into all of the views (premillennial, amillennial, etc...). I am going to focus on what we have been focusing on throughout this whole study – the cloud! I am going to talk about the resurrection, but not when it will happen (pre-trib, mid-trib, post-trib). So what are we going to discuss in this section? Jesus’ return is going to happen, no one knows when it will happen, and He will be coming back in a cloud.

Believe it or not, we are going to begin discussing the return of Jesus in the Old Testament. Daniel, who is the interpreter of dreams and solver of difficult problems, had a dream himself one night while he “lay on his bed” (Daniel 7). The dream itself foreshadows the coming of the anti-Christ and the judgment of God. As the dream unfolds, the Ancient of Days is seated on His throne and the books were opened. Then something glorious happens – let’s look at Daniel 7:13-14. Remember to continue marking the text key words.

13 *“I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.*

14 *“And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion*

*Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.*

1. How was the Son of Man presented to the Ancient of Days?

2. The book of Daniel was written between 605 BC and 536 BC. This is 500-600 years before Jesus is even born. What does this tell you about God's sovereignty?

Let's look at a companion verse in the New Testament.

***7** BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. Revelation 1:7*

3. What similarities do you see between this verse and the passage from Daniel?

4. Is there any possible way that we might "miss" his return? Why or why not?

Let's look at some other passages that discuss the return of Christ. The church at Thessalonica was given comfort from Paul concerning His second coming.

***13** But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. **14** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. **15** For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. **16** For the Lord Himself will descend from*

heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. [17](#) Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord...1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

What a terrific summary of what is going to happen upon the rapture.

5. According to verse 14, who will be coming back with Jesus?

6. Beginning in verse 16, list the things that will happen upon Jesus' return to earth.

7. In what are those who are alive and remain going to be caught?

What a thrill! We have already seen from the passages in Daniel and Revelation that Jesus will be coming back in a cloud. He is going to be accompanied by those who have already died in Christ. Then the rest of us will be caught up in a cloud! The cloud, which we have seen to represent the very presence of God, will snatch us up to be in glory forever! We will be wrapped in God's presence – Hallelujah!

Here are a few more references:

[26](#) *“Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. Mark 13:26*

[27](#) *“Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. [28](#) “But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Luke 21:27-28*

30 *“And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory...Matthew 24:30*

62 *And Jesus said, “I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.”*

Surely there can be no doubt about the fashion in which Jesus will return to this earth. Acts 1:9-11 told us that He would return in the same way that He ascended after His death – in a cloud!

To me, one of the most powerful verses concerning the presence of God falls in Revelation 21:3. We have used the word tabernacle (skene) throughout this study to represent the external dwelling place of God in the Old Testament. We have also studied how our bodies are the tabernacle of God after we are saved through Jesus’ blood. After Christ returns and gathers all of us together and we are in the New Jerusalem (heaven), God says this...

3 *And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, Revelation 21:3*

8. Where is the tabernacle of God in the New Jerusalem?

9. What is the relationship between us and God at this point?

This is the climax of God’s presence - Him being “tabernacled” among us. No longer is there a need for a veil made of material or of flesh. We will be in our glorified bodies and can finally behold the fullness of God’s glory together in the New Jerusalem. If we just knew what was awaiting us in this glorious city, we would have no fear of death. We would not continuously grieve over our loved ones who have died in Christ – they are in a much better place.

While we are still on our pilgrimage here on earth, let’s seek the presence of God. How do we do it? Just as Paul told us, we look into the mirror of His Word (the Bible) and we will be changed gradually, from glory to glory. Do not live

the “average” Christian life my friends. The average Christian is not accessing the power that God said is available to us. Matthew 13:11 tells us that we have been given the mysteries (secrets) of the kingdom of God. But we must study God’s word diligently to uncover these secrets. We must actively seek him and deepen our relationship.

In Acts 17, Paul is in the city of Athens. He is walking around the city, amazed at the number of idols that are surrounding him. When he finally has a chance to speak to the citizens of Athens, he says this:

[27](#) that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

Paul knew the Athenians were seeking something because of the number of idols in the city. They even had one set up for the “unknown god” just in case they accidentally missed one. This verse says all you have to do is reach out to God, because he is not far from any of us.

I began this study by telling you about my 2nd grade “feely” project. It did not fill the God-shaped void in me any more than any of the idols Paul saw in Athens or the idols Ezekiel saw in the temple. Friends, if you are seeking something to fill the void in your life – power, respect, money, popularity – just quit groping at things that will not fill the void. Reach out to God. He is reaching out to you. He longs to surround you in the cloud of His presence.