

SEEING THE UNSEEN GOD

Text: Hebrews 11:24-27; Key Verse: Hebrews 11:27: "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

I. OUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT EVERYTHING IS LIMITED

When Sir Isaac Newton, the great British scientist was an old man, someone said to him, "Dr. Newton, you must have a tremendous store of knowledge." He responded, "I remind myself of a little boy walking along the seashore picking up shells. The boy has a handful of shells in his little hand, but all around him is the vast seashore stretching all directions as far as the eye can see. All that I know is simply a handful of seashells, but the vast universe of God is filled with knowledge that I do not possess."

Will Rogers said, "Everybody is ignorant--only on different subjects." Dr. Samuel Johnson, the famed English lexicographer, was known as the most learned man in England. Once he was corrected of a mistake he made in defining a word. This was discovered by a "society lady" and when at a formal outing, thought she would give an embarrassing moment to the great doctor by asking him why he had mis-defined this certain word. Without excuse, Dr. Johnson quickly replied, "Ignorance, Madam, sheer ignorance." To his credit, he was admitting he did not know some things. Ralph Waldo Emerson reasoned that if a man were to start reading all the books in the British library day and night, non-stop, not eating or sleeping for seventy years, he would not have scratched the surface of the library's content.

Psalms 8:3, 4: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

II. NO LIVING PERSON HAS EVER SEEN GOD IN HIS FULL EXPRESSION

Deuteronomy 4:12: "And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice."

Compare: Exodus 33:20; Colossians 1:15; I Timothy 1:17; I Timothy 6:15-17; I John 4:12a: "No man hath seen God at any time...."

Michelangelo's painting of God in the Sistine Chapel looked like an old body builder floating in on a cloud, supported by several fat little cherubs. When the Orthodox Church paints Christ, His face looks

asymmetric, because the left side of his face is meant to represent the divine nature of Christ, the right side the human nature. When we try to picture God, at best, it is bizarre; at worst, it is idolatrous.

A.W. Tozer said, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. God lies beyond our thoughts, towers above them, escapes them and confounds them, in awful incomprehensible terror and majesty." All of man's soaring thoughts and imagination of what God looks like will pale next to the reality of His full expression when we see Him in all His glory. It will take a glorified body to retain His full Person.

III. GOD IDENTIFIES WITH HIS PEOPLE, THUS GIVING INSIGHT TO HIMSELF

Wonder of wonders, God identifies with us. Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." John 4:24:

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Anthropomorphism is the practice of attributing human characteristics to God. Psalm 94:9: "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" God hears and God sees. In love, He wanted men, women, boys and girls to be able to experience sound and sight as He does, so in love He gives us ears and eyes. Having been created in God's image, we take on limited characteristics of some of His attributes. We may see, but we are not all-seeing. We may hear, but we are not all-hearing. To go further in this thought process, let's read Psalm 94:10b,11: "...He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." We know, by God's tutorial, but we are not all-knowing.

I love this line from Charles Dicken's, *A Christmas Carol*: "Come in! and know me better, man! I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Look upon me! You have never seen the like of me before!" Far better than knowing the spirit of Christmas is knowing the One Whom we celebrate at Christmas. Paul said in Philippians 3:10a, "That I may know Him...."

IV. CHRIST GAVE US A GLIMPSE INTO DEITY

We enter a complex and perhaps a complicated situation when we are told in Genesis 32:30, "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." This is what the theologians call a theophany which comes from two Greek words: *Theos*,

meaning "God" and *phainein*, meaning "to show or to appear." God reveals Himself, but not in full splendor. John 1:18: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Christ reveals the person of God in the person of Himself. I John 4:12: "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." Here by proxy, we sample the glory of Christ in the fellowship with one another. More literally, John 1:14 declares, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Man was able to look at God through Jesus Christ and survive because Christ was truly human. Through the veil of our Lord's truly human body, we were protected from the full display of Deity. Hebrews 10:19, 20: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." Through Christ offering His sacred body for us through the crucifixion we enter, by faith, into the holy of holies. The Christian author and first female to receive a degree from Oxford, Dorothy Sayers said, "For whatever reason God chose to make man as he is— limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death—He had the honesty and the courage to take His own medicine. Whatever game He is playing with His creation, He has kept His own rules and played fair. He can exact nothing from man that He has not exacted from Himself. He has Himself gone through the whole of human experience, from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair and death. When He was a man, He played the man. He was born in poverty and died in disgrace and thought it well worthwhile."

VI. ONE DAY WE SHALL SEE GOD FULLY AND FOREVER

As I mentioned in point II, it will take a glorified body to retain His (Our Lord's) full Person. Job 19:26: "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." I John 3:2: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Philippians 3:20, 21: "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

Because our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ was willing to offer Himself for us in His sacred flesh, we are accepted in body, soul and spirit (I Thessalonians 5:23). Colossians 1:21, 22: "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproueable in his sight." Hebrews 10:10: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Until the day comes when we see all of God's full glory in Heaven, we accept and see Him by faith, with purified hearts. Hebrews 12:2: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Matthew 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." II Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." I Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

CONCLUSION:

Let us meditate over Exodus 33:18-23.

-Pastor Pope-