

## Glory

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Transfiguration Sunday



This picture showed up on my Facebook stream this week. It's a picture from the Kalamazoo Nature Center's Facebook page.

Please describe this picture.

What comes to mind as you see this picture? What words, phrases, images?

In a number of languages a clear distinction is made between some object which is bright in and of itself (that is to say, the source of brightness or radiance) and objects which are bright because they reflect light from some source.<sup>1</sup>

When Moses received the law, he was shining so brightly that he had to put a veil on his face. Why?

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<sup>1</sup> Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Vol. 1: Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (174). New York: United Bible Societies.

**Shekinah.** The Shekinah (Heb. שְׁכִינָה), the radiance, glory or presence of God dwelling in the midst of his people, is used by Targumist and Rabbi to signify God himself, for legal Judaism dislikes ascribing form or emotion to deity. Nevertheless the God conceived in purified human terms inspired the noblest prophetic utterances, whereas the legalist God became cold, abstract, aloof. The Shekinah, nearest Jewish equivalent to the Holy Spirit, became, with other OT ideas or derivatives (Word, Wisdom, Spirit, etc.) a bridge between man's corporeality and God's transcendence. The term is post-biblical, but the concept saturates both Testaments. It underlies the teaching that God dwells in his sanctuary (Ex. 25:8, etc.), or among his people (Ex. 29:45f., etc.). These and cognate passages use the root verb שָׁכַן, 'to dwell', from which Shekinah is derived.<sup>2</sup>

When the Jewish tabernacle was first built, it was filled with bright shining cloud

When the tent of meeting was carried through the wilderness, it was filled with bright light (Ex. 40:34–38).

Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray." <sup>19</sup> And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The Lord'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. <sup>20</sup> But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live." <sup>21</sup> And the Lord continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; <sup>22</sup> and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; <sup>23</sup> then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

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The Gospel Lesson. As I read this, look for images of Shekinah glory. It might help to close your eyes and imagine yourself there — Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and *you*.

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. <sup>30</sup> Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. <sup>31</sup> They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup> Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. <sup>33</sup> Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is

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<sup>2</sup> Stewart, R. A. (1996). Shekinah. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer & D. J. Wiseman, Ed.) (3rd ed.) (1090–1091). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Ex 33:18–23). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. <sup>34</sup> While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup> Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” <sup>36</sup> When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen. <sup>4</sup>

Questions:

- (1) What images of Shekinah are present?
- (2) What did Jesus look like?
- (3) What did Moses and Elijah look like?
- (4) What was it like inside the cloud?
- (5) What was it like when you heard The Voice?
- (6) What was it like when Moses and Elijah, the cloud, and The Voice were gone?

This is not the last time we will see his glory:

I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup> I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet <sup>11</sup> saying, “Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.”

<sup>12</sup> Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup> and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. <sup>14</sup> His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, <sup>15</sup> his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. <sup>16</sup> In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force.

<sup>17</sup> When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, <sup>18</sup> and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades.” <sup>5</sup>

And —

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<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Lk 9:28–36). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Re 1:9–18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

<sup>9</sup>Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” <sup>10</sup>And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. <sup>11</sup>It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. <sup>6</sup>

Glory.

Glory.

Glory.

How do you reflect the glory of God?

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup>for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

<sup>14</sup>Do all things without murmuring and arguing, <sup>15</sup>so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world. <sup>7</sup>

How will you reflect the glory of God this week?

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<sup>6</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Re 21:9–11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

<sup>7</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Php 2:12–15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.