

AUGUST 25th
GOD'S FAITHFUL PRESENCE

"Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys."

EXODUS 40:34-38

How do you describe God's presence? Go ahead and try doing it right now. What words did you use to unpack the concept of God's presence? Here in Exodus 40 we have "the cloud" settling on the Tabernacle. Was it a literal cloud, or was this the best way to describe the mystery of God's presence? As Boice points out in his commentary on the life of Moses, these terms are used interchangeably in the Pentateuch: sometimes they call it "pillar of the LORD," sometimes it's called "the glory," and other times it's called simply "the radiance." What is God teaching the Hebrews and what does it mean for us today as God's men?

Boice emphasizes that the meaning of "radiance" in the Hebrew is "shekinah." Most Bible teachers when they refer to this passage at the end of Exodus call this the "shekinah glory." What's odd about God's presence in the cloud is that more people don't discuss this truth. Boice wisely mentions that Bethlehem, Nazareth, Abel, and Satan are more commonly known to everyday Christians. However, the "shekinah" is mentioned fifty-eight times across ten different books of the Bible. Therefore, the question remains: why so little conversation about this immense truth? Perhaps the reason for this is the mystery of God. We don't quite know for sure. However, what we do know is that here in Exodus 40 God finally comes to dwell with His people, which is what He promised to them when He rescued them from Egypt.

Wondering about the mystery of "the cloud" can dwarf the truth of God's great guidance. Take a moment again to read again the last four verses in the entire book of Exodus. What do you notice with God's guidance? Now, take a moment to put on the sandals of the Hebrews. Do you think they enjoyed the unpredictable nature of God's "cloud?" Would you? Consider again that they are traveling in the desert. It's hot and you've got a family. James Boice points out the difficulties that they may have faced. Human nature hasn't changed all that much. We just don't like change. We want the details before we set out on a journey. But God. God doesn't take our comfort or our plans into His consideration. Why would He? He's God!

Men, what does this have to do with you? Well, for starters, we again see that we aren't much different from the Hebrews here. They are described by God as "stiff-necked." Hmmm. I guess we join the club on that one! We want our way, in our time. But God has clearly stated His purpose is to "conform us to the image of His Son." His faithful presence is always leading us to His destination. The question is, will we trust Him?

Spend some time thinking about ways that you've gotten ahead of God and planned your own ways. Ask Him to forgive you and give you His grace so you can trust His timing instead of your own plans next time.

Further Reading: Numbers 9:15-23

