

The Glory of God's Presence

In **Isaiah 64:1-3** the writer declares, *"Oh, that you would burst from the heavens and come down! That the mountains might shake at Your (Shekinah) Presence! As fire kindles the brushwood, as fire causes water to boil - to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your (Shekinah) Presence! When You did awesome things which we did not expect, You did come down, and the mountains shook at Your (Shekinah) Presence."*

The word "Shekinah" is made up of related words in the Bible which describe the "Presence" of Jehovah God in a certain locality. These related words are used extensively to describe the "Shekinah" visitations. The word "Shekinah" itself is not found in any Biblical texts, but the concept clearly is! The word most certainly is derived from "shahkan," and whoever first used the word "Shekinah" coined it to describe the *"abiding, dwelling or habitation"* of the physical manifestations of Jehovah God as described in **Exodus 24:16, 40:35** and **Numbers 9:17-18** (and various other places where "shahkan" is used).

Note, the word is also used to describe the "Shekinah" Presence in the Tabernacle and later in the first and second Temples. The word "mishkan," a derivative of "shahkan", is often translated *"tabernacle."* "Mishkan" means *"a dwelling place."* That is, the *"dwelling place of Him who dwells."* The Hebrew verb "shahkan" literally means to take up residence for a long period of time, and its primary meaning is *"to reside and continue as a member of the community."* Of course, when it refers to Jehovah God, it takes on an added mysticism that is obvious from its use in the scriptures.

Some people object because the word "Shekinah" is not to be found in the Old Testament in its noun form. Yet, the idea of a physical manifestation of Jehovah's localised dwelling on this earth is, nonetheless, scriptural. Also, "Shekinah" in this context is recognised among many Christians - even though they may be ignorant of the origins of the word. In the Encyclopaedia Judaica the "Shekinah" is defined as *"the Divine Presence, the numinous immanence of God in the world, ...a revelation of the Holy in the midst of the profane."*

The "Shekinah" was first evident when the Israelites set out to escape from Egypt. There it appeared as a cloudy pillar in the day and a fiery pillar by night: *"After leaving Succoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people."* (**Exodus 13:20-22**) God spoke to Moses out of the pillar of cloud in Exodus 33, assuring him that His **Presence** would be with the Israelites (verse 9). Verse 11 says God spoke to Moses **"face to face"** out of the cloud, but when Moses asked to see God's 'glory', God told Him, **"You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live"** (verse 20). So, apparently, the visible manifestation of God's glory was somewhat muted. When Moses asked to see God's glory, God hid Moses in the cleft of a rock, covered him with His hand, and passed by. Then, He removed His hand, and Moses saw only His back. This would seem to indicate that God's glory is too awesome to be seen completely by man.

Note, the visible manifestation of God's Presence was seen not only by the Israelites but also by the Egyptians: *"During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, 'Let's get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt!'"* (**Exodus 14:24-25**) Just the presence of God's "Shekinah" glory was enough to convince His enemies that He was not someone to be

resisted. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the “*dwelling place of God’s glory.*” **Colossians 2:9** states, “*in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,*” causing Jesus to declare to Philip, “*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*” (**John 14:9**). In Christ, we see the visible manifestation of God Himself in the second Person of the Trinity. Although His glory was also veiled, Jesus is nonetheless the Presence of God on earth. Just as the Holy Presence dwelled in a relatively plain tent called the “tabernacle”, so did God’s divine Presence dwell in human form - in Jesus. “*He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him*” (**Isaiah 53:2**)

In **Leviticus 26:11-12** the Lord says, “*I will live among you, and I will not despise you. I will walk among you; I will be your God, and you will be My people.*” One of the clearest revelations God has given us, is His desire to dwell with His people. His **Presence** appeared many times in the Person of the “Angel of the Lord.” He was also seen in the Burning Bush by Moses, then in the Fire by night and the Cloud by day to the children of Israel. He dwelt in the Ark of the Covenant, and inhabited the Temple with His Glory after the dedication offered up by Solomon (**2 Chronicles 7:1-2**). He dwelt among men in Christ, fully and bodily, and now dwells in us by His Holy Spirit. Oh how wonderfully the Lord has used human language and words to reveal this Spiritual truth to us. So let’s focus on the word intently until we see what the Apostle John saw as he penned this passage of scripture.... “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... 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*” (**John 1:1 and 14**).

Two of the words in **John 1:14** are really important in their relationship between the Hebrew Old Testament and the original Greek translation. First, you will find that the Hebrew word “dabar”, usually translated “word” in our Bible, was represented in the Greek version by the word “logos”, and that the two are almost exact in meaning. Second, when these Jewish scholars were translating the Hebrew word “shaknan” - “to dwell” (as described earlier), and the related noun “mishkan” - “tabernacle” (again, as described before), they chose the Greek word “eskinosen”, from the noun “eskineo”, again meaning “to tabernacle” or “to dwell”. The original Greek text reads, “*And the Word flesh became, and tabernacled among us, and we discovered His glory, a glory as of an only begotten with a father, full of grace and truth.*”

It is obvious that John wants to connect the **Abiding Presence** of God in the Old Testament with the **Glorious Presence** of God in Christ. This is confirmed when we realise that somewhere in the history of ancient languages, both the Hebrew word and the Greek word must have had a common ancestor. After all, were they not both written by the same Holy Spirit! Therefore, in my mind there is no doubt that John was thinking about the “Shekinah Glory” and “the Tabernacle” (God manifesting Himself physically), when he confidently states... “*The Word became flesh, and dwelt (“tabernacled”), among us.*” And that Christ’s followers discovered the Glory (the “Shekinah Glory”), God’s abiding Presence! Don’t you wish you were there to behold His glory?

While God’s “glory” seems to be identical with His **Presence**, it is often used to mean “*the intense, tangible manifestation of God beyond the every day worship experience*”. The “**Glory**” can be defined as “the revelation of the Presence of God. It is the manifestation of His presence. He is Glory! He is everywhere, but ‘glory’ is the evidence of that reality ... When God’s ‘glory’ comes down, it’s a bit of Heaven’s atmosphere coming down to us, a taste of His abiding **Presence**.”

Wouldn't you like to discover the "Shekinah" Glory? Wouldn't you like to experience the profound and glorious Presence of Jehovah God? Well, if God is with us today, then so is His glory! But be careful, His Glory may surprise you! "*And the priests could not perform their duties because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled His temple*" (**1 Kings 8:11**). "*The temple of the Lord was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their duties because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God*" (**2 Chronicles 5:13**). God's divine Presence (His glory) often causes powerful stimulus to operate in the physical, mental and emotional realm collectively. And if it wasn't for the blood of Jesus none of us could survive in God's Presence.

Isaiah 60:1 says, "*Arise, shine for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.*" The Hebrew word suggests, "*that which is substantial or heavy.*" Implying that this Glory can be felt as well as seen. The Glory of God is truly amazing! It can shake mountains and buildings; it raised Jesus from the dead; it shines on, in and through His children; and it can also be reflected back toward God through Christ like transformation. The Glory of God is multifaceted and multi-operational. Therefore, it's very difficult to find one exact definition. However, there is an aspect of God's **glory**, which can be found in both the Old and New Testament scriptures, and that is, "*His brightness or splendour*".

This is exactly what we have been focusing on today! That is, the supernatural glow emanating from God's Presence - as in the "Shekinah Glory" (**Exodus 16:10; 25:22; Luke 2:9; Acts 22:11; Romans 9:4; 2 Corinthians 3:7; James 2:1**).

There's no doubt that God wants His divine Presence - His "Shekinah Glory" - to increase here at Cornerstone. Therefore, as He reveals Himself in greater and greater measure, the 'brightness and splendour' of God must also increase. Are you ready (and willing) to live in the *glory cloud* - where God Himself dwells? What an awesome place to be! If you are ready and willing, then first you must **hunger** for God's Presence. This is what He revealed to me as I was preparing this series!

Now I mean, really hunger! For **hunger** alone will ensure that God's abiding Presence comes, and then remains with us. Oh how I long to dwell where He is and bask in His glorious Presence! Oh how I long to feel the weight of His "Shekinah Glory!" Lord make us **hungry** enough for You to manifest Yourself in a greater measure than ever before.... AMEN!