

DID ABRAHAM SEE GOD?

Genesis 18:1-2

How can “the LORD appeared unto Abraham” stand alongside “No man hath seen God at any time”?

Bible Study Discussion

Starting Point: Who Visited Abraham?

Establish the text first, then ask the theological question.

Genesis 18:1-2

"The LORD appeared unto him... and, lo, three men stood by him."

Genesis 19:1

"And there came two angels to Sodom at even..."

THE LORD

+

TWO ANGELS

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THREE VISITORS

Not God plus three men. The LORD appeared together with two angels — three visible visitors in total.

Question Asked

How can these statements be held together?

John 1:18

"No man hath seen God at any time..."

Exodus 33:20

"Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live."

Genesis 18:1

"And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre..."

How?

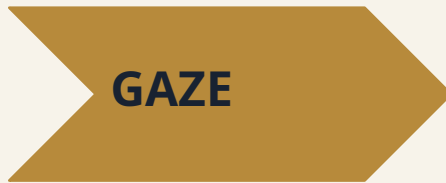
Why Did God Say, “No Man Shall See Me, and Live”?

Exodus 19:21

“Charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.”

Exodus 33:18–23

“Shew me thy glory... Thou canst not see my face... I will put thee in a clift of the rock... and will cover thee.”



The problem is not simply that God refuses to be seen. Mortal man cannot tolerate the unrestricted manifestation of His glory.

Moses' Face Helps Us Understand

Exodus 34:29-35

"The skin of his face shone while he talked with him."

2 Corinthians 3:7

"The children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance."

GOD'S GLORY



MOSES ENCOUNTERS IT



MOSES REFLECTS IT



ISRAEL STRUGGLES

If reflected glory on Moses was difficult to behold, how much more the fullness of God's own glory?

God Makes Himself Visible in Forms Man Can Tolerate

Genesis 15:17

**Smoking furnace
and burning lamp**

Exodus 13:21

**Pillar of cloud
and pillar of fire**

Exodus 24:10–11

**“They saw
the God of Israel”**

Numbers 12:8

**“The similitude
of the LORD”**

Isaiah 6:1

**“I saw also
the Lord”**

Ezekiel 1:28

**“Appearance of the likeness
of the glory of the LORD”**

The invisible God can make His presence visible — but He determines the form and measure of the revelation.

Response

No mortal man can behold God in the fullness of His glory and live. Yet God can reveal Himself in a form or manifestation that human beings are able to tolerate.

Therefore, Genesis 18 records a genuine appearance of the LORD to Abraham together with two angels.

Discussion

1. Why could no man see God in the fullness of His glory and live?
2. How do these scriptures help us understand “the LORD appeared unto Abraham”?