“God’s Shekinah Glory”

God’s Glory revealed ultimately through the light of the world – Jesus!

9.30a.m. Sunday 13 August, 2017

Delivered by Senior Pastor Marshall Muller @ the Laidley Baptist Church (Qld).

Introduction:

Perhaps an illustration about when something invisible becomes visible in an amazing way. Or ... set up our big shade structure – illustrating ‘to tabernacle’ among us. Might also get someone to bring the communion table up onto the platform under the structure.

I grew up learning about God in Sunday School & Church. Great stories and great concepts of who God is. But do you know the single most frustrating thing about God for me as a kid was ... you couldn't see Him. If only God would mysteriously materialize and I could see Him. I wonder what He would look like.

I remembered thinking if God showed up – even just for a day or a week, wouldn't that lift His profile? Wouldn't more people believe and be saved? It would get on the news and God would be on all the morning TV shows talking about heaven and our need to deal with sin etc. As a kid I kept thinking to myself it would be so much easier if God just showed up in person. His real presence so we could ask questions, walk with Him, know where He is leading. Hey, but I was only a kid. Have you ever thought that though?

In 9 weeks' time Yvonne and I head off to Israel. We visited there about 5 years ago and we are looking forward to returning and visiting the very area that our Messiah Jesus walked and lived. The last time we went was mind-blowing. It was too much to take in too quickly. But what we discovered was that the Bible just comes to life, it’s like you go from black & white TV to colour TV. There is no going back ever.
I love reading the Old Testament and of the nation of Israel as God looks after all million of them on the way to the Promised Land. When I was a kid I used to imagine what it might be like for God to go ahead of you and behind you as a constant reminder of His presence.

One of the things that used to fascinate me as a kid, and I would dream about, was the pillar of cloud by day & the pillar of fire by night. I thought that it would be the coolest thing for the invisible God to be visible every moment of the day as a reminder of His presence, power and closeness.

In 2017 as a Church (God’s living stones) as we go into the future and the unknown, wouldn’t it be the coolest to have the invisible made visible? To know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is surrounding us and where to go and where not to go. Just like Israel as they meandered through the desert. A pillar of cloud visible in the daytime & a pillar of fire at night.

Could you imagine the township of Laidley if a fiery cloud hung above 7 Breuer Street every night and lit up the sky? People would know that the God of Heaven was present. I wonder how many would turn up for Prayer meeting then? All of Israel’s enemies could see this – God's Shekinah Glory – and they would've been afraid. Very afraid!

Today on the day of our AGM I want to speak about the One who goes before us, surrounds us and goes behind us, the One who protects and cares for us. I want to speak about the One who guides, leads & directs us to His purposes, who leads us out of our disobedient wanderings and into the Promised Land.

Now, I’m not sure if you’ve ever heard or had teaching on the subject of God’s Shekinah Glory ever before. But it’s one of the most profound things we can wrap our heads around in the Scriptures.

Did you know that God’s Shekinah Glory was present at the beginning of creation, and will be present at the close of time as well?

**The Shekinah Glory – what is it?**

The Shekinah Glory → is the visible manifestation of the presence of God. It’s His presence, it’s when He descends to ‘dwell’ among men. So whenever the invisible God becomes visible, or when God’s Omni-presence becomes localized, this is the Shekinah Glory. God revealing Himself. It’s a bit like *Invisible Woman* out of the Fantastic 4 from Marvel Comics, or the pictures hidden within patterns in the
I've brought one along today – see if you can see the invisible picture come out of the visible patterns.

I think it’s a great illustration of our invisible God being revealed. You have the aha moment when you see the picture stand out to you in the book. It is like that today when we see God show up in situations in our Church or in our ministry or in the community or people – it’s the aha moment when it all becomes clear.

So … What does ‘Shekinah Glory’ mean?

It generally means the ‘glory of Jehovah’ or the ‘glory of the Lord’. Other titles suggest ‘dwelling’ (which is what God’s Shekinah glory does) or ‘to tabernacle’ with us.

The Shekinah Glory in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament most of the visible manifestations take the form of light, fire or cloud (or a combination). In the New Testament there is a new form – the Incarnate Word (Jesus). More about this as we get further into the message.

The Shekinah Glory is closely associated with one of more of 4 elements:

- The Angel of Jehovah
- The Holy Spirit
- The Cherubim
- The motif of thick darkness

Some scholars suggest that when God said ‘Let there be light’ at Creation, it was the Shekinah Glory that lit up the earth. Now think about it - It wasn’t until the 4th day that the sun, moon and stars were created. But vegetation was Day 3, so what lit the earth from day 1 when God said “Let there be light”? God’s Shekinah Glory.

The first appearance in human history of the Shekinah Glory is found in Genesis 3:8 in the Garden of Eden. Adam & Eve hid themselves in the garden from God’s presence because of their sin. So God drove them out & placed (i.e. caused to dwell) a Cherubim with flaming sword at the entrance of the garden.

Right at the Garden of Eden, the visible manifestation of the glory of God through fire.

When Abraham made a covenant with God in Genesis 15 (where God walks through the sacrifice in the figure of eight), we see the motif of darkness. God appears in
visible form as a smoking furnace and a flaming torch passing between the pieces of the animal sacrifice that Abraham had prepared.

We also see the Shekinah Glory next in the burning bush in Exodus 3. Once again God manifests himself in a visible form – a flaming fire in a bush.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the most common appearances that we think of in the Bible about God’s Shekinah Glory is the Exodus, with the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire that went before and behind the nation of Israel as they travelled through the desert to the Promised Land of Canaan. It also protected the Israelite’s camp from the Egyptians. The Shekinah Glory here is associated with the Angel of Jehovah and in Exodus 14 is shown as a thick darkness, yet giving light within that thick darkness.

In Exodus 16 it was the Shekinah Glory that provided Israel with the manna & quail in the desert in their wanderings (verses 6-12)

We see God’s visible manifestation again at Mount Sinai when the 10 Commandments were given. Thunder, smoke and lightning and Jehovah descended down upon it in fire (Exodus 19). Once again, God making himself visible. The people were fearful because they saw the Glory of God and they requested to hear the voice of God no more they were so afraid.

So from this passage we read that God’s glory was present at the giving of the tablets of law – the Law of Moses. It says the glory of God ‘abode’ on the mountain and God appeared as a devouring fire and He called Moses into the midst of the cloud and he was there 40 days and nights.

In Exodus 33, Moses makes a special request to see God’s glory. It’s the story where God passes in front of Moses but he tells him that he will only see the back parts, and he will not be able to see his face. In other words he will only see his passing brilliance (like an afterglow) not who God really is. God promised to Moses that he will see a greater manifestation than any others before him (Exodus 34).

This is the account where Moses face shone when he came down from the mountain. It was the reflection of God’s Shekinah Glory that shone on Moses’ face, just like the moon reflects the light of the sun. It was so bright that Moses had to wear a veil to cover it.

Later in Exodus 29 we see the instructions for the Tabernacle and that it was sanctioned by the Shekinah Glory so that God may ‘dwell’ with the children of Israel. And once the Tabernacle was finished the Shekinah Glory took up residence within
it (Exodus 40:34-38). It describes how a cloud covered the Tabernacle and then God’s glory filled it.

Tabernacle when translated from Hebrew means ‘the dwelling place of the Shekinah Glory’. So God now dwells with Israel in a very real and special way, and leads them through their wilderness wanderings. He dwells specifically with Israel by taking up residence in the Holy of Holies over the Ark of the Covenant and under the cherubim.

The Tabernacle was covered in weather beaten animal skins (not really attractive), but God uses the unattractive to reveal his glory. It was completely dark – no windows – the only light being the shining of the Shekinah glory.

If you ever wondered how the High Priest was able to do his duties in pitch darkness, it was because he had light manifested through the shining Glory of God.

You can find God’s Shekinah Glory in the books of Leviticus and Numbers in various ways – authenticating those who kept the Law and through rendering judgment for sin and obedience.

We see it again in Joshua’s day and the period of the Judges. One example is where the Philistines capture the Ark of the Covenant and the glory of the Lord departed (1 Samuel 4:21-22) – it didn’t depart Israel, but departed from the Ark of the Covenant.

When Solomon built the Temple, he built a new Holy of Holies, and God’s Shekinah Glory was transferred from the Tabernacle to the Temple. In 1 Kings 8 we read about God’s Glory coming to dwell in the Temple. It was a house of habitation – a place for God to dwell. Just like Moses before him, Solomon prayed that God would dwell with Israel forever.

In the book of Ezekiel, we see the Prophets foretelling of the coming departure of God’s glory from Israel. It was the Shekinah Glory that was showing this to Ezekiel. We’ve seen it as a fire, cloud, darkness, cherubim, but here we see it revealed as the Holy Spirit. God’s glory departs from Israel in 4 stages (that’s another message in itself).

But then as the Jews return from Babylon, the second Temple was built. But God’s Shekinah Glory was not in the 2nd Temple as it was in the first. Haggai 2:3 promises that the glory that had departed would come in a greater and different way to the 2nd Temple. So Israel would again see the Shekinah Glory of God.

So what about the New Testament – do we see God’s Shekinah glory there?
The Shekinah Glory in the New Testament

The first appearance of the Shekinah Glory in the New Testament is found in Luke 2:8-9. We sing about it around Christmas time. The glory of the Lord shone round about the Shepherds in the fields. It was announcing the birth of the Messiah to Jewish shepherds.

Matthew 2:1-12 has the record of the visit of the Magi from the east led by a visible star (meaning brilliance). It was no ordinary star. You can read in the account that it appears, then disappears, it leads them from east to west, then north to south, it stands over the very home of Jesus. It’s like it was his privately-owned star – like no other star before.

It is the re-appearance of the Shekinah Glory of God, announcing the birth of the Messiah to the Gentiles.

From the Haggai 2:3 prophecy God’s Glory appears in a different and new form ... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

We mentioned the term ‘to dwell’ from the Hebrew, but in the Greek the term means ‘to tabernacle’. The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. The result of all this was that men were able to behold the glory of God in the form of a man – THE God-Man. Jesus. God now revealed.

This fulfilled Isaiah 9:2 which spoke of the coming of the light.

‘The people that have walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelled in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined.’

Are you seeing what I’m seeing – Jesus as the light of the world? The Shekinah Glory of God. When Jesus walks into the Jewish Temple compound many times during his ministry He is literally fulfilling the prophecy of Haggai – that God will fill this 2nd Temple with something far greater! He manifested God’s glory through his teaching, the cleansing of temple etc.

Let’s not miss something here – In the Old Testament the Shekinah Glory appears and then disappears before making a more permanent abode in the Tabernacle & Temple. It then departed from the Mount of Olives.
In the New Testament it first appears and then disappeared and then came in a more permanent form in the Person of the Messiah, abides with Israel for an extended period of time. Then later it departs also from the Mount of Olives after a public ministry of three and a half years.

The greatest manifestation of the Shekinah Glory in the person of Jesus is found in the Transfiguration passages (Matthew 17, Mark 9, Luke 9, 2 Peter 1). All of them picture the brilliance of the Shekinah Glory.

It says Jesus’ face shone like the sun and his garment became as white as the purest light. A bright cloud overshadowed them, the voice of God speaking out of the cloud (the same as on Mount Sinai). The Messiah-ship of Jesus authenticated by God’s majestic glory. His Shekinah Glory.

Here we have it – Jesus as the visible manifestation of God’s presence in a brand new form (as was promised by God earlier). Three of the Apostles (Peter, James & John) were able to behold the Shekinah Glory in all it’s brightness and in a form greater than before. And there are a lot more New Testament passages that teach that Jesus as the Messiah is the new manifestation of God’s presence (some examples are 2 Corinthians 4:5-6; Hebrews 1:1-3; Revelation. 1:12-16).

We see it again in the Book of Acts in Acts 2 at Pentecost – tongues of fire – God’s presence associated through the Holy Spirit. Also, on the Damascus Road, where Paul is blinded by a great light out of heaven (above the brightness of the sun) and again a voice (Acts 9:3-8, 22:6-11; 26:13-18).

It is the Shekinah Glory of God that commissions Paul to become the Apostle to the Gentiles.

**The Shekinah Glory in the Future**

So we have seen God’s Shekinah glory – His presence becoming visible in the Old Testament and now in the New Testament, but what about the future?

We see it the Book of Revelation in areas like the Great Tribulation (Revelation 15:8). It is mentioned in Matthew 16:27 regarding the Second Coming of the Messiah – ‘*the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his father and with his angels and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds*’.

Just prior to the Second Coming, the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens, at that sign will certainly be the Shekinah Glory, for it states that the Son of Man will come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.
In the Messianic Kingdom we will see the greatest manifestation of the Shekinah Glory. We haven’t got time to go into all of it, but suffice to say that Jesus will again be the visible manifestation of God’s Shekinah Glory.

God will dwell with mankind. Revelation 21:23-24 says ‘And the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God did lighten it and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it.

Because of God’s Shekinah glory being there in the eternal order, there will be no need of natural light (sun/moon) or artificial light (lamp). The Shekinah Glory will provide all the light that will be necessary and all those who inhabit that place will be able to walk in that light. And so it will be for all eternity.

Wow! Isn’t that something to look forward to? I can’t even wrap my head around it!

Have you got the connection yet?

Jesus is the new and visible manifestation of God’s Shekinah Glory to mankind. He is the light to all people. This is key for us today.

*Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." (John 8:12 NLT)*

He has come to reveal God’s invisible nature to us in a different and a new way, much greater than ever before. The invisible God (and His glory) becoming visible.

God’s glory through Jesus – the Word Incarnate – in other words, the very voice and message and glory of God, has come to dwell (tabernacle) with us. He has made his home within us. He has chosen us as his home, his Holy of Holies to be present. Our bodies are his temple, his place of abode, for his most Holy Spirit.

**Conclusion**

Today I was going to bring my large beach shade shelter/structure to erect on stage. I was going to throw blankets over it like the Tabernacle in the Old Testament, and make it like God’s dwelling place – a prop that might help us understand this a bit better. But I thought that might be a bit limiting. And that’s Old Testament stuff anyway.
We have a new and living way now - Jesus now resides not in a tent, but in the hearts of those who invite him in.

In 2017 as we look forward with vision to the future – we are to be encouraged that Jesus is already there. And He wants to reside in the hearts of many more who need his Shekinah glory light in their darkened lives. Laidley needs God’s revealed Shekinah Glory – Jesus. Laidley needs Jesus. How is that going to happen – in part through the saints at the Laidley Baptist Church.

Revelation 3:20-21 says that Jesus – God’s Glory - stands at the door of our heart. Did you know that every day God’s presence wants to come into your heart?

20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. 21 To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. (Revelation 3:20-21)

My Father turned 77yo last week. Von & I visited last week and spent some time chatting and installing his present – wireless headphones. I went to the store and it’s always a God-thing. I talked to the guy selling them. he said ‘Oh, they’re expensive you know.’ I said that I knew. He looked up his computer and he said Wow – you wouldn’t believe it – there is a $130 discount today & I have 2 sets available. God is always surprising me like that!! Anyway, my Dad can now watch the sport channel without my Mum having to put up with it all day. He might be going a bit deaf too, so the volume is always up full. Now there is peace.

I remember when we lived in Tasmania for 10 years. I would ring him up and we would speak for some time. Even though we are apart by thousands of kilometres, it was like we were together right opposite each other just chatting and telling stories.

Revelation 3:20-21 is my Dad’s favourite Bible passage. You might like other great passages in the Scriptures, but this one is my Dad’s favourite. I am so blessed that my Dad, as a young man, heard the knock of Christ’s nail pierced hand (God’s revealed glory) on the stubborn, hardened door of his heart.

I am so glad that heard that he recognized it and responded and has now lived a life fellowshipping with Jesus, his Messiah. That he has found food enough in the course of life to nourish and sustain him. That at the end of life, being victorious over sin and death, he can enjoy being in the very presence of Jesus in heaven. Surrounded by the Shekinah glory of God.
There are many moments that stand out to me from my Father in my life. One moment in his life stands out more than all the others. It’s like it happened yesterday. It was at a little tiny church in a country town. It was packed that night. I was a kid. I was more interested in running around outside after the service and the great supper that was going to be served.

But it was at the end of the service when I saw my Father break down in tears and acknowledge Christ as the Lord of his life again. He had heard him knocking and had opened the door.

I didn’t understand it at the time and what it really meant to him (and to me), but over time I now understand how important that was to my Dad and for the rest of his life … but also how important it was for me to see and understand. My Dad has left a legacy of Christ visible in his life. The invisible God made visible to his children through my Father knowing and living with Jesus. I have seen the Shekinah Glory of God burning in the heart of my Father.

I’m going to pray in a minute, and I’m praying for anyone here who is listening for Jesus’ knock and may not have heard it before. But today you hear the knocking on your heart and you don’t want to waste another day or another hour in your sin.

**I’m wondering today who is listening?** I’m wondering today who will open the door of their heart, so the very presence of God can take us residence in their heart … forever … for all eternity.

If you want to truly follow Jesus, and to be his follower and disciple, then there is always an opportunity to respond publicly this morning.

God himself says in 2 Chronicles 7:14 “if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

We’re going to sing to close our time of worship today. If you have never accepted Jesus – the light of this world – into your heart, and you definitely want to from the bottom of your heart, just step out from your seat and come to the front as a public declaration that you desire to humble yourself and seek God’s face.

He is knocking … who will hear Him respond?

**Closing Song – What a beautiful name, the name of Jesus**

Let’s Pray.
Revelation 3:20-21 (New International Version)

20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

21 To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.

2 Chronicles 7:14 (New International Version)

14 “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”