

A VEIL OR A VISION?



TEXT: 2 Corinthians 3:12-18

INTRO.: A. Paul has been dealing with "THE STORY OF GLORY." 1) The temporary glory of the Law and 2) The permanent glory of the Gospel. (cf. v.7,8). Here he picks up the former reference to Moses and the Law & what happened to his face when he came face-to-face with the Lord on Mt. Sinai. He seems to become caught up with the concept of this unique and interesting experience. His sanctified imagination along with the Holy Spirit's revelation leads him into a comparison of Moses' veil and its fading glory and the Gospel and its enduring glory. He speaks of **"A VEIL OR A VISION."**

B. Paul is driving home the contrast between the O.T. ("Old Covenant") and the N.T. ("New Covenant"), just as he did in the previous verses when placing the letter and the spirit side-by-side. Paul wants his Jewish readers to see clearly the reasons for Israel's blindness and the acceptance of the Gospel by the Gentiles.

TRANS.: Paul launches a somewhat lengthy explanation of what the veil on Moses' face signified and compares that with the glory of Christ & the N.T. Gospel. He even seems to explain what was not explained in the O.T. account... (Ex.34:29-25)

I. A VEIL ON MOSES: V.12,13

A. To Protect Israel...(from gazing on God's glory)

1. Moses knew that Israel was not spiritually prepared to see God's glory on His face.
2. His countenance must have been so brilliant that "they were afraid to come nigh him..." *so that "till Moses was done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face..."*

ILLUS.: This was probably the origin of the concept of halos of light around the head of those men & women who were seen as holy or saints by the artists & sculptures.

No one knows how long this brilliance continued in Moses' face, but we do know from what Paul tells us that the glory faded. In fact he tells us that Moses continued to wear the veil so Israel would not see the fading glory...

B. To Prevent Israel...(from seeing the fading glory of the Law)

1. In v.12 Paul emphasizes that he used "great plainness of speech," which reveals the great moral courage of the Apostle.
2. His statement in v.13 is a clear & plain statement revealing the fading nature of the Law: *"...that which is abolished."*

II. A VEIL ON MINDS: v.14

A. Blind Unbelievers: v.14a

1. Here Paul speaks plainly again about the spiritual blindness of the nation.
2. He is saying that Israel still is in blindness, i.e., even though they are the custodians of Scripture and read Scripture & revere Scripture, - they "just don't get it!"

ILLUS.: This blindness is supernatural! It is a product of the hardness of the nations heart in their rejection of Christ, wherein God pronounced a judicial blindness on the nation, and it is the product of Satanic blindness as well. 2 Cor.4:4

- a. Jesus, in the parable of the sower, spoke of how Satan came & stole the Word of God from people's hearts.

Matthew 13:19 *When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.*

- b. Jesus, the Light of the world, is in a constant warfare with Satan, the prince of darkness, over the souls of men.
- c. The focus of this battle is centered on the Word of God.

B. Unblinded Believers: v.14b

1. If moral obstinacy causes darkness in the mind of blinded unbelievers, then moral openness brings light to the mind of unblinded believers.
2. Apparently there was a spiritual veil on our minds as well as the mind of the Jew, but **"in Christ"** that veil is done away.

III. A VEIL ON HEARTS: v.15

A. Darkened Understanding:

1. There is more to spiritual understanding than mere comprehension of words.
2. It goes beyond the mind ("noema"), to the heart ("kardia"); it is not mere intellectual comprehension or acceptance of facts, but an internal matter of will. Jn.1:12

- a. Paul argues that when Moses (the Pentateuch) is read, the readers may comprehend the words, but do not receive them into their hearts.

ILLUS.: It is at least interesting that even today when the Torah is read by the rabbis, they wear a veil or a head covering called a "tallith". It may be only symbolic but it is also instructive.

Paul is actually saying that it is as if a veil or a covering is thrown over the Scripture making it nearly impossible for the Jew to comprehend His own Scriptures.

- b. This blindness is national, not individual (obviously so, since Paul & many other Jews were getting saved in his day, & continue to do so today).

IV. A VEIL REMOVED: V.16-18

A. Israel's Veil Removed: v.16 "it shall..."

1. One day, after the Tribulation, the veil will be removed from Israel's heart & mind & they will recognize Christ as their Messiah & will receive Him.

Revelation 1:7 *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.*

Romans 11:25-26 *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob...*

2. Finally, at long last, Paul's dream & desire to see his people saved, will become a reality.

B. God's Glory Revealed: v.17,18 **"we all..."**

1. In v.17 Paul finally reveals the "spirit" he spoke of way back in v.6, **"which giveth life."**
2. It is none other than the Lord Himself: **"Now the Lord is that Spirit."**

- a. He has again picked up the theme of the letter vs. the spirit.

- b. His argument is that the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
- c. The light and liberty of the Spirit are liberating and transforming.

QUOTE: Wiersbe: *"...immature people must live by rules and regulations, (but) God wants His children to obey, not because of an external code (the Law), but because of internal character."*

- 3. The Law could not transform anyone, it could merely show the insufficiency of mere humans to keep it.
- 4. The glory that shone on Moses face caused Israel to turn from him.
- 5. The glory that shines from the Gospel compels men to look to the Savior & transforms them into "the same image."

CONCL.: Paul has spoken of the contrast between the O.T. Law & the N.T. Gospel, using the veil Moses wore after his encounter with the Lord on Sinai as a graphic illustration of the blindness of Israel and the fading glory of the Law, and the glory of the N.T. Gospel and its permanence and transforming power. It was Paul's burning desire that all may know the Gospel and the Savior it presented.