

Psalm 97:2 "Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

God abides in darkness? What does darkness mean? Doesn't Scripture say Satan dwells in darkness?

Acts 26:18 "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan [darkness] unto God [light]..."

Satan is in darkness, what about the Father? Doesn't He abide in light?

Psalm 104:2 "[God] Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain."

1 Timothy 6:16 "[God] Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."

1 John 1:5 "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

If God is light as depicted in these verses, how do we understand Him to be surrounded by darkness?

The Hebrew term *hōšek* (darkness) has 81 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible. It refers to darkness in a literal and figurative sense. Literally it may refer to darkness of creation and night, and figuratively it may refer to death (1 Samuel 2:9; Job 3:5) and time of pain and suffering (Job 17:12). Another Hebrew term for darkness is *'arāpel*. We will explore it further when we turn our attention to Exodus 20:21. There are several Greek terms that refer to darkness in the New Testament as well. The word *skotos* occurs about 22 times in the NT and can refer to physical darkness, spiritual darkness, implying ignorance or error, eternal misery etc.

Let's look at the example of Moses:

Exodus 20:21 "And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was."

How come in this verse Moses approached Him in the thick darkness? Why is God enveloped by darkness in this text? Let's look for some answers.

The Hebrew word used for darkness in Exodus 20:21 is *'arāpel*. The term *'arāpel* is used to express the veiled glory of God. It refers to the darkness that envelops God's appearance. The darkness mentioned in verse 21 blocks God's glorious appearance from Moses. God is surrounded by the darkness not because He is not glorious, but to protect the people who couldn't handle seeing God's glory.

God surrounds Himself in darkness because we are in darkness. Remember, Jesus came to "open [our] eyes, and turn [us] from darkness to light." God used darkness to be able to meet with us where we are at, just as He has to use human language to communicate with us.

The darkness that surrounded God reiterates that He is a perfect and glorious God and we are sinful beings. He had to veil His own glory. Exodus 33:18-23 states that no sinful man living on earth can see God's face and live.

"And he said, 'I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.' And he said, 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.' And he said, 'Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.' And the LORD said, 'Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.'"

Why is it that no man shall see God's face and live? If we see His face, does that mean God must kill us? No! In our sinful state mankind cannot endure God's perfect glory while in His presence. We die not because God lashes out at us for our unholiness, but because of the way sin reacts to a loving God.

Charles Spurgeon once said: "The same sun which melts wax hardens clay. And the same Gospel which melts some persons to repentance hardens others in their sins." It is not the sun causing this reaction, but the ingredients in the wax and clay as they react to the sun. Paul says it like this:

2 Corinthians 2:15,16 "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"

Paul mentions that at the second coming of Christ many will be destroyed "with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Why does this brightness destroy them? Because, like Moses, there is darkness in us that cannot handle it. If we are not standing upon "the Rock" which is "Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4), who turns us from darkness to light, we will not be able to handle the glory of God.

How will we react in the presence of such a loving and glorious God? It all depends on our understanding of God's character.

This thick darkness that Moses experienced also reminds us that although the wall of darkness separates us from God, He still finds a way to reach out to us. He loves us.

2 Corinthians 4:6 "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The study of *'arāpel* also underlines that God abides with His people even in the darkest moments of their life. No matter how thick the darkness is, like Moses, we will always find God waiting for us.

During the crucifixion of Christ there was darkness all over the land.

Matthew 27:45 "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour."

Commentaries suggest that this darkness "was a supernatural darkness. In no case could it have been caused by an eclipse of the sun, because the moon was already past full." Was God present in that darkness or not?

Notice what Ellen White says:

"In that thick darkness God's presence was hidden. He makes darkness His pavilion [Ps. 18:11], and conceals His glory from human eyes. God and His holy angels were beside the cross. The Father was with His Son. Yet His presence was not revealed. Had His glory flashed forth from the cloud, every human beholder would have been destroyed. And in that dreadful hour Christ was not to be comforted with the Father's presence. He trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him." **{Desire of Ages, page, 753.4}**

Profound love compelled God the Father to come as close as He could to His Son in the most agonising moment of His life. Many times when we pass through the darkest moments of our life we question God's presence and like Jesus cry out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Matthew 27:46 "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is to say, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'"

Our cry was hidden in the cry of Christ on the cross.

Luke 23:45 "And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst."

The temple's torn curtain echoes to us that there is no more separation, no more distance, but rather God is with His people in the darkest moments of their lives.

Sometimes our darkness is the shadow of His Presence.

1 Kings 8:12 "Then spake Solomon, The LORD said that he would dwell in the thick darkness."

Psalms 97:2 "Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

The latter verse in Psalm 97:2 speaks in Hebrew parallelism: the clouds represent righteousness while the darkness represents judgment. We often misinterpret the darkness to mean that God is a stern judge, rejecting those who hate Him. He then snaps and executes the sinner out of His anger and wrath. Sin deceives us to think this way because that's how we react to those who hate us. We desire God to be like us, rather than for us to be like God who is always "kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke 6:35).

Ellen White writes that, within the darkness surrounding the cross, "God permits His Son to be delivered up for our offenses. He Himself assumes toward the Sin-Bearer the character of a judge, divesting Himself of the endearing qualities of a father." (*The Faith I Live By*, p. 407).

God *assumed* the character of a judge within the darkness because that's how *we* see Him. Because of His endearing qualities of a father, He met us where we were at in order for us to believe that divine justice has been served, when in fact it was our system of justice which was satisfied (Luke 22:53).

"He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies."

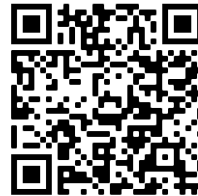
(Psalm 18:11)

Why is it that God, who covers Himself "with light as with a garment" (Psalm 104:2) would ever make "darkness his secret place" and "his pavilion round about him" be "dark waters and thick clouds of skies"?

Is God like yin and yang, displaying attributes of both light and darkness? Not according to John who said, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5)

So what is the purpose of this darkness?

Watch *Agape*
YouTube Series:



For more info, see the book:

Christ's Antediluvian Cross

Download the entire book for free at:



Talking Rock
Sabbath Chapel
1250 W. Price Creek Rd.
Talking Rock, Georgia 30175

www.trsc.today

God's Pavilion of Darkness

"He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies."

Psalm 18:11