

## **Can God Be Seen by Man?**

There are verses in the Old Testament which speak of men seeing God. In what seems to be a contradiction, there are also verses in the Old and New Testaments which say that God cannot be seen by man.

Exodus 33:20, 23 say on the one hand, "Thou shalt not see my face: For there shall no man see me, and live." However, Numbers 12:8 says that Moses would behold the similitude (form) of the Lord.

The difficulty can be cleared up if it is realized that when anyone saw God, he only saw Him in an assumed form. (This is called a theophany.) He did not see God in His essential being.

For example, in Genesis 32:30 Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face." But verse 24 shows that he saw God in the form of a man. Exodus 24:10, Numbers 12:8, and Judges 13:21 are further instances of God being seen by men. It must be remembered that they only saw God in an assumed form and not in His essential deity.

When we come to the New Testament we find that both John and Paul deal with this subject. John 1:18, 5:37, and 1 John 4:12 all refer to God in His essential being; John's statements agree with Exodus 33:20, 23. 1 Timothy 1:17, written by Paul, also refers to God in His essential deity. As such, God is invisible. But all who saw the Lord Jesus Christ saw God; they saw Him in the form of a man.

The conclusion then must be that wherever the scripture speaks of God being seen, it refers to an assumed form—a theophany. When it speaks of God being invisible, it speaks of God in His essential deity.