

SUMMARY: An apparent conflict exists in Exodus 33 on whether Moses did or did not see God although they were talking face to face. The apparent conflict is a misinterpretation considering face to face is a relational term and seeing is a vision term; and that 4 verses say that God is an invisible spirit which cannot be seen.

Questions have arisen on the apparent conflict between Exodus 33:11 which says “**used to speak to Moses face to face**” and Exodus 33:20 which says “**You cannot see My face**”.

A first point to notice is that this is not a conflict between the books of Exodus and Matthew which were written years apart by different authors even likely speaking different languages. This is within the same chapter of Exodus in the same writing by the same author. It is far more likely to be a misinterpretation than a conflict.

Secondly, it is comparing apples to oranges. Face to face is a relational term whereas seeing my face is a visual term. It would be reasonable to say two blind men were talking face to face, but were not seeing each other.

Thirdly, the Bible clearly states in 4 verses (following) that God is invisible, so He cannot be seen. God is a spirit being which we are not able to fully comprehend in our lifetimes, but apparently being a spirit and being invisible are part of it.

That being said, it is reasonable to say that God and Moses were proximately located and talking, but Moses did not see God. It is also reasonable to state the clearly the author know that both Jesus and the angels had seen Jehovah’s face. Obviously when the speaker was speaking of a man, he was speaking of a normal human being.

VERSES APPROPRIATE TO THIS DISCUSSION:

Exodus 33:11 Thus the Lord **used to speak to Moses face to face**, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

Exodus 33:18-23 Then Moses said, “I pray You, show me Your glory! And He said, “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.” But He said, “**You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!**” (me or face?) Then the Lord said, “Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. “Then I will take My hand away and **you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.**”

John 1:18 **No one has seen God at any time**; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

1 John 4:12 **No one has seen God at any time**; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

VERSES SAYING GOD IS INVISIBLE

1 Timothy 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, **invisible**, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 11:27 (Moses) By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as **seeing Him who is unseen**.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His **invisible** attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the **invisible** God, the firstborn of all creation.

MANUSCRIPT REALITIES

We need to not be overly idealistic about some of the teachings of the Bible in the pre-word processing days.

1 Corinthians 1:14-16 I thank God that I **baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius**, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. **Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas**; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.