

The Glory of God

In the Face of Jesus Christ

By Steve Pruitt

Early one morning around 5:00 o'clock I was sitting on the love seat in our living room having a time worship and prayer. During my prayer time I was intensely praying for God to show me his glory. Just as I got the words out of my mouth the room lit up with a bright light. My heart felt like it would explode from the force of the pressure. I could feel it beating rapidly in my throat. Fear gripped me as I sat frozen to the love seat. Never in my life have I been so afraid. It is almost indescribable. Maybe it was just a little tiny fragment of how Isaiah felt when he saw the Lord. He said, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips..."

Almost as soon as the fear gripped me I began to feel very foolish. I realized that just as I had prayed those words that a car pulled out from the road across from our house and the headlights had shown through the window and illuminated the room. As foolish as I felt it still took several minutes for my heart to get back to normal.

When I felt somewhat normal again I sensed God asking me, "Do you still want to see my glory?" I answered, "I'm not sure if I am ready to see your glory. If the headlights of a car scared me that bad I can't imagine if it had really been you." I changed my prayer that morning from, "Lord, I want to see your glory." to "Lord, help me get ready to see your glory." That light, even though it came from a car, exposed the condition of my heart. I think God set me up.

What is the glory of God? Let's begin to answer that question by looking at a number of occasions in scripture when the glory of the Lord appeared.

The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.

Exodus 24:16-17 (ESV)

Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Exodus 40:34-35 (ESV)

And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

1 Kings 8:10-11 (ESV)

Often people describe God's glory as a cloud. However, the cloud itself is not the glory of God. My perception is that God uses the cloud to hide man from his glory; the cloud is a protection.

In Leviticus 16 we read where the high priest was directed to take a censer of burning coals, mix some incense with it and bring it with him into the holy of holies. He was to wave the censer to create a cloud to cover the mercy seat which sat on top of the Ark of the Covenant. God told him to do this "so that he does not die." It was above the mercy seat where God's glory was manifested; he met with them there (Exodus 25:22). The priest had to create a barrier (a cloud) between him and the glory of God or he would have died.

The Apostle Paul wrote to his disciple Timothy concerning God. In 1 Timothy 6:16 he said, . . . *who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.* The Apostle John wrote, *This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.* (1 John 1:5-6) God is perfect light. Should man in his natural state look at the unveiled glory of God he would die. However, I believe to define the glory of God we must go further than the light. The light is the brilliance of his glory.

There was one man who dared to ask God to see his glory; Moses.

Moses said, Please show me your glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But He said, You cannot see my face; for no man shall see me, and live. And the Lord said, Here is a place by me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while my glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with my hand while I pass by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen.

Exodus 33:18-23 (ESV)

God explained to Moses that no one could see his face and live and offered to hide Moses as his glory passed by. God also equated his glory with his goodness. According to Strong's Concordance the Hebrew word for goodness is *tuwb* which means good in the widest sense. It also carries with it the idea of beauty, gladness and welfare. God also proclaimed the name of Jehovah before Moses. Jehovah is the Jewish national name for God and means self-existent and eternal.

When Moses asked to see God's glory he used the Hebrew word *kabowd*. *Kabowd* for glory which means weightiness (gravity, seriousness, importance, enormity, magnitude), splendor and honor. God's glory is everything that makes up God; his person; his authority, power, sovereignty and infinite beauty. Everything that God is, his attributes (holiness, faithfulness, goodness, loving kindness, patience), makes up his glory.

God has gone to great lengths to display his glory in creation. Isaiah heard the seraphim in heaven crying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). The psalmists had glimpses of God's glory.

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

Psalms 8:1 (ESV)

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Psalms 19:1 (ESV)

The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory.

Psalms 97:6 (ESV)

The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens!

Psalms 113:4 (ESV)

Do you get the picture? The earth is full of his glory, the heavens declare his glory and his glory is above the heavens. Just think of the humungous solar system. There are billions of stars and numerous galaxies millions of light years apart with nothing but space between them. It would be a lot of wasted space if it was about us, but God put it all there to display the enormity of his glory. Loraine Boettner wrote, "The world as a whole and in all its parts

and movements and changes was brought into a unity by the governing, all-pervading, all-harmonizing activity of the divine will, and its purpose was to manifest the divine glory.”

You see, God has a burning passion for his glory. He is jealous for his glory. God said to Isaiah, *I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.* (Isaiah 42:8 ESV) Again God called himself Jehovah; the self-existent or eternal one. The same attribute he revealed to Moses.

As if he had not already given a full display of his glory, God did something else magnificent. The apostle John wrote about it.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:1-5 (ESV)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14 (ESV)

Isaiah had prophesied many years before the birth of Jesus that a virgin would bear a son and his name would be called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14) meaning with us is God. Glory surrounded the birth of God’s son.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!

Luke 2:8-14 (ESV)

Do you get what is happening here. It is so much more than a feel good story we read at Christmas. It is more than just a story of baby being born. It is the Almighty God pouring everything he is into human flesh so that the world might see his glory and know him.

It was Jesus of whom Isaiah prophesied would be the great light (Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:15-16). It was Jesus of whom Simeon proclaimed that God had prepared to be a light of revelation for Gentiles and for glory to Israel (Luke 2:32). It was Jesus of whom John said was the true light that enlightens everyone (John 1:9) and Jesus himself said, *I am the light of the world.* (John 8:12; 9:5) God’s inapproachable light was squeezed into human form so that man might know what he is like.

The Apostle Paul wrote, *For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* (2 Corinthians 4:6) In other words; In the face of Jesus Christ was the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

The Greek word Paul uses in this verse for face means the face; the view from the front. But it goes much deeper it also means the countenance, appearance or the presence or the person. It was in the person of Jesus that the glory of God was illuminated, revealed or made known. We get our revelation of the glory of God from the person of Jesus. The Greek word Paul used for glory in the passage means to render glorious, honor or magnify.

The person of Jesus rendered God glorious, he magnified God, he honored God by the way he lived, by the words he said and by the works he performed. People can look at the life and ministry of Christ and say, “That is what God is like.” There is no better expression of the glory of God than Jesus. Jesus embodied all that is God. Jesus was the glory of God because he was God, the Word, in the flesh.

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For **by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth**, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and **in him all things hold together**.*

Colossians 1:15-17 (ESV)

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

Colossians 2:9-10 (ESV)

*He is the radiance of the **glory of God** and the exact imprint of his nature, and **he upholds the universe** by the word of his power.*

Hebrews 1:3 (ESV)

God poured himself into human flesh so that we could see his glory. The way Jesus lived his life and performed his ministry exemplified the attributes or glory of God. He told us that he did not come to seek his own glory (John 8:50). When Jesus preached to the poor and received all that came to him by faith he portrayed God’s love and grace. When he healed the sick, cast out demons and raised the dead he displayed God’s glory and power over Satan and extended God’s mercy and compassion (John 11:4, 40). When he calmed the seas, multiplied the bread and turned water into wine he portrayed God’s sovereignty over nature. When he taught the people, cleared the temple and outwitted the religious leaders he portrayed God’s authority and wisdom. And when he was finished, Jesus told the Father, *I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.* (John 17:4 ESV)

Jesus was the glory of God before the world existed. He prayed, *And now Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory I had with you before the world existed.* (John 17:5) (ESV) Paul wrote to the Philippians, . . . *Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* (Philippians 2:5-11 ESV) Jesus glorified the Father before the world existed. He glorified the Father while in human form and he will glorify the Father when he returns.

What does this mean for us? We can look at the Psalms for some answers.

Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

Psalms 29:1-2 (ESV)

Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!

Psalms 66:1-2 (ESV)

My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all the day.

Psalms 71:8 (ESV)

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!

Psalms 96:3 (ESV)

All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your saints shall bless you! They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power, to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

Psalms 145:10-12 (ESV)

The Psalms are saturated with God telling us to give glory to him; which is the most loving thing he could do. He is the most glorious being in the universe. For God to tell us not to glorify the most glorious thing in the universe would not be loving. The most satisfying thing that God can give us, the thing that would satisfy our souls completely for all eternity, is himself. God's best gift to us is himself; his glory. And we just stated that his glory is everything he is. So he commands us to give him glory.

How do we do that? Let's look at the Psalms we just read.

The Psalms tell us that our mouths are to be filled with his glory all day. We are to declare or speak of his glory to those around us; to the nations; telling of his glorious kingdom. We are to sing about his glory and sing to give him the glory due his name. And it is not optional. The Pharisees and reaped the reward of failing to give God glory.

As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest! And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, Teacher, rebuke your disciples. He answered, I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out. And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.

Luke 19:37-44 (ESV)

The Pharisees in Jesus day were more concerned about their interpretation of the scriptures being the right one and afraid of losing their place in the synagogue than they were the glory of God. John wrote, *So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Council and said, What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.* (John 11:47-48 ESV)

The signs the Pharisees were referencing were the very miracles Jesus performed to display the glory of God. They were the very signs and miracles for which the crowd was lifting their voices in praise to Jesus. The Pharisees said, "Stop this, Jesus." The glory of God was riding on a colt right in front of them and they didn't like neither what they saw nor heard. They complained about the worship and it cost them everything. The very thing they sought to keep by silencing the praise was the very thing they lost. Jesus prophesied their destruction. They missed the day of their visitation and they missed the revelation of the glory of God.

Our purpose for existence; our mission in life, should we choose to accept it or not, is to display the glory of God in the earth and to give him the glory due his name. And just a warning, if we choose not to accept it, we will self-destruct.

If the main focus of my life is me, me, me and mine I will not fulfill my purpose for existence; which is God, God, God and his. If my mouth is filled with me it cannot be filled with God. If I am the center of my life God cannot be. Because we are to give God glory not only by what we say but by how we live. The psalmist wrote, *Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!* (Psalms 115:1 ESV) If my life is about me I will never be satisfied because on God can give lasting satisfaction.

To have a passion for God's glory, by default, means to have a passion for God's Son; Jesus.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
(Philippians 2:9-11 ESV)

John wrote that he who does not have the Son does not have the Father (1 John 2:23). The Son glorified the Father and the Father glorified the Son (John 13:31-32). They are inseparable.

Ask yourself: Where do my passions lie? Am I passionate about Jesus and the glory of God? Am I more passionate about my theology than I am the glory of God? Does my life declare the glory of God? Is my life centered on me and mine or is it centered on the glory of God? Where my heart is, there will be my treasure. Let's not miss the time of our visitation.