

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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THE GLORY OF THE LAMB

John Owen is rightly considered to be one of the greatest theologians of all time. One of his outstanding works is *The Glory of Christ*.¹ This work was completed just before his death. In a letter dictated the day before he died, he wrote: "I am going to Him whom my soul hath loved, or rather who hath loved me with an everlasting love; which is the whole ground of all my consolation . . . I am leaving the ship of the church in a storm, but whilst the great Pilot is in it the loss of a poor under-rower will be inconsiderable . . . the promise stands invincible that he will never leave thee nor forsake thee."²

- I. **THE MAJESTY AND GLORY OF GOD.** Isaiah 42:8 declares, *I am the LORD, that is My Name; I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to graven images.* (NASB) "His glory is the manifestation of His nature, attributes and power (cf. John 1:14; 2:11). *My glory . . . My praise!* The revelation of His glory is designed to draw forth the praise of those to whom He reveals it. His glory and praise are incommunicable."³ E. J. Young elaborates: "In the Semitic languages the name expresses the nature of a person. God is Yahweh, and when we understand what is signified by that word, we know what is the Name of God. There is obvious reflection upon the revelation of the name at Sinai. Until the time of the exodus God was known to His people as El Shaddai. At the time of the exodus, however, He gave to them a further revelation of His nature, which found expression in the word Yahweh. From a reading of Exodus 3 we learn that this word has to do with the eternity or aseity of God, and that it reveals this eternal God as the One who sovereignly chooses His people and performs for them an act of redemption. This covenant name is Yahweh, who has chosen the servant. Therefore, because God is the eternal One who has entered into covenant with His people, the truth stands unchangeable that the servant in whom the Lord delights will come to bring salvation to this people and to deliver them from their bondage. Inasmuch as the Name of the Lord is Yahweh, He will not give His glory to another. The reference here is to His essential glory, which He possesses in and of Himself. Were God to give His glory to another, He would be denying Himself, negating His own nature."⁴ "The principal word in the Hebrew for this concept is *kābôd*, and in the Greek *doxa*, which is derived from *dokeō*, *to think* or *to seem*. These two meanings account for the two main lines of significance in classical Greek, where *doxa* means opinion (what one thinks for himself) and reputation (what others think about him), which may shade into fame or honor or praise. I. OYT usage. Since *kābôd* derives from *kābēd*, *to be heavy*, it lends itself to the idea that the one possessing glory is laden with riches (Gen. 31:1), power (Isa. 8:7), position (Gen 45:13), etc. To the translators of the LXX it seemed that *doxa* was the most suitable word for rendering *kābôd*, since it carried the notion of reputation or honor which was present in the use of *kābôd*. But *kābôd* also denoted the manifestation of light by which God revealed himself, whether in the lightning flash or in the blinding splendor which often

accompanied theophanies. Of the same nature was the disclosure of the divine presence in the cloud which led Israel through the wilderness and became localized in the tabernacle. So *doxa*, as a translation of *kābôd*, gained a nuance of meaning which it did not possess before. At times *kābôd* had a deeper penetration, denoting the person or self.”⁵

II. **THE GLORY OF THE SON.** The noted Dutch theologian Petrus Van Mastricht wrote, “in glory comes the celebration or manifestation of the eminence recognized through its brightness, which is more properly called glorification than glory. By it the inward eminence that has been recognized, together with its proper estimation, is made public and extolled. And this is done: (1) by God himself, as he glorifies himself, when he makes manifest the ineffable and incomprehensible preeminence of his essence in his attributes and operations (Num. 14:21; Ps. 72:19; Lev. 10:3). (2) By the divine persons themselves, among themselves: thus the Father glorifies the Son (John 17:1), the Son in turn (as the radiance of his glory, Heb. 1:3) glorifies the Father (John 17:4; 8:49), and the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son (John 16:14) and the Father, and thus he is called *the Spirit of glory and of God* (1 Peter 4:14). (3) By angels and men, when they make manifest their recognition, experience and estimation of the divine glory, and amplify and extol, as much as they can, that very eminence of God (Isa. 6:3; Luke 2:14; Ps. 8:1; Rev. 4:10-11). (4) By the Word of God, and especially the Word of the gospel, which accordingly is called the glorious gospel (2 Cor. 3:7-8), since it makes known to us the glorious attributes of God – his power, wisdom, grace, righteousness – and the glorious Son of God (Phil. 2:11). (5) By the works of God (Ps. 90:16; 111:3): of creation, preservation, and governance (Ps. 8; 19:1; 104:24, 31); especially by those exceptional works which we call miracles, inasmuch as in them the glory of the divine omnipotence appears more splendidly. But chiefly (6) by the operations of grace, in which he is concerned with his church. That entire counsel of peace, in which he decided to save the church, and that most wise economy, which he has brought forth in his governance; to what end do they point other than the glorification of God? *That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* (Phil. 2:11)? Accordingly the angels declare, *Glory to God in the highest!* (Luke 2:14). In particular, (a) the glory of mercy and of avenging justice shows itself in the eternal business of predestination (Eph. 1:5-6; Rom. 9:22-23). (b) The glory of wisdom, in his seeking out a way of deliverance that is harmonious with both justice and mercy, and indeed in distributing as it were the task that each person of the Trinity assumed to himself in this business of redemption, all because of which Paul exclaims, *Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* (Rom. 11:33), and the Savior is denominated the wisdom and power of God (1 Cor. 1:24). Again, (c) the glory of love and grace toward the world (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). Furthermore, (d) the glory of holiness, by which he could not even tolerate our sins in his own Son, and thus rigidly punished them Rom 8:32). In addition, € the glory of avenging justice, by which he did not spare his own Son (Rom. 3:25). Therefore, for these and other reasons, the gospel is called the glorious gospel of the blessed God (1 Tim. 1:11), and the light of the glorious gospel of Christ is said to shine (2 Cor. 4:4).”⁶

III. **ENSIGNS OF HIS GLORY AND POWER.** “It is undeniable that the expectation of the Church is unique. This is because the message concerning Christ’s coming links the past with the future, as is shown in the doctrine of the *session*, which both refers back to the redemptive-historic past and points to the future. Scripture never depreciates the past when it deals with the future. In the Revelation of John the apocalyptic visions are replete with references to him who is the first begotten of the dead (Rev. 1:5) and who washed us from our sins in his own blood (Rev. 1:5). Christ is in the midst of the seven candlesticks as one like unto the Son of man (Rev. 1:13). He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (5:5) who is worthy to open and to read the book of history, the Lamb who receives the adoration: *Thou*

wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood (5:9, KJV; cf. 5:8, 12, 13; 7:10, 14, 17; cf. also 11:8; 12:11; 13:8). The eschatological imagery is replete with holy memories of the past, and everything is presented in the light of that which took place – the battle which was crowned with victory (12:5, 7ff.; 17:14), the following of the Lamb (14:4), the testimony of Jesus Christ (12:17), the song of the Lamb (15:3), the faith of Jesus (14:12), the marriage of the Lamb (19:7), the bride of the Lamb (21:9), the apostles of the Lamb (21:14), and the Lamb’s book of life (21:27). Here the expectation of a glorious future is permanently safeguarded against the threat of a vague ahistoric longing for a better world. This expectation is deeply rooted in history and derives its strength from what became historic reality in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”⁷ We read in Revelation 5:9 and 12 that the Lamb is *worthy* to receive adoration and praise. The grounds for this is His death and the blessings this has brought His people. He possesses power and wisdom to accomplish salvation. This echoes Isaiah 52:13 where we are told that the suffering Servant of the LORD *will act wisely*.

- A. ***Worthy to Receive Authority.*** In Matthew 28:18, Jesus declares, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Note that this was said *prior* to His ascension.
- B. ***Worthy of Riches.*** Wealth is associated with royalty. He has obtained an inheritance because He is heir of all things (Hebrews 1:1-4).⁸
- C. ***Worthy to Receive Strength.*** He not only has the authority, He has the power to rule as King. This is demonstrated in a number of ways, but notice how this is connected in Acts 2:33 with the outpourings of the Holy Spirit.
- D. ***Worthy of Honor and Glory.*** Honor is due Him. Glory was His before the foundation of the world (John 17:1-5).

CONCLUSION: Over and over again we are told that only the Lamb is worthy. Owen declared: “He alone was a suitable and capable subject of it. He alone could bear the weight of this glory. No mere creature in heaven or earth was fit to be thus made the head of the whole new creation of God. In none of them could all things consist. None of them was qualified to be thus in the place of God, to have all things depend upon him, and be put in subjection to him; so as that there should be no communication between God and the creation but by and through him alone. Therefore, when the Holy Ghost assigns this glory to him, he so describes him as that we may discern his singular meetness for it, as that he is *the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power* (Heb. 1:3). He is: *The image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature, by whom all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.* (Col. 1:15-17). Such a one alone, and no other, was fit to bear and uphold this glory. And the glory of his person is such, as that it is the blessedness of all creatures to centre in this glory of his office.”⁹

¹Owen's works have been reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust in 23 volumes. "Meditation and Discourse on the Glory of Christ" is found in Volume 1. This has also been reprinted and revised by Christian Focus Publication under the title *The Glory of Christ: His Office and Grace*, with a preface by Sinclair Ferguson (2004).

²Ibid., p. 20.

³W. E. Vine, *Expository Commentary on Isaiah* (rpt. Nelson, 1997), p. 95.

⁴E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary III* (Eerdmans, 1972), p. 122.

⁵E. F. Harrison, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Baker, 1973), p. 236.

⁶P. Van Mastricht, *Theoretical Practical Theology: Faith In The Triune God* (rpt. Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), p. 474.

⁷G. C. Berkhouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics: The Work of Christ* (Eerdmans, 1965), p. 247.

⁸The Bible does not allow wealth and riches to be monopolized by the type of crass materialism that permeates our society. Listen to this summary to Moulton: "*Ploutos* comes from the same root as the Greek verb *pimplemi*, I fill, and is connected etymologically with the Latin word from which *plenty* comes, with the Sanskrit *purnam*, and with the English *fill*. And it is true that we are made far more rich, full, complete (another word from the same root) on the spiritual level than we can ever be on the material. The New Testament therefore uses our series of words for riches thirty times in a spiritual sense." H. K. Moulton, *The Challenge of the Concordance* (Bagster, 1977), p. 202.

⁹Owen, op. cit., p. 167. To this Warfield adds, "There is here something more than merely the association of our Lord with glory, as when we are told that He had glory with God before the world was (John 15:5), and after His humiliation on earth (though even on earth He manifested His glory to seeing eyes, John 1:14, 2:11, 17:22) entered again into His glory (Luke 24:26, John 17:24, 1 Tim. 3:16, Heb. 2:9, cf. Mt. 19:28, 25:31 [Mk 10:37]), and is to come again in this glory (Mt. 16:27, 24:30, 25:31, Mk 8:38, 13:26, Lk 9:26, 21:27, Titus 2:13, 1 Pet 4:13). We come nearer to what is implied when we read of Jesus being *the Lord of Glory* (1 Cor. 2:8), that is He to whom glory belongs as His characterizing quality; or when He is described to us as *the effulgence of the glory of God* (Heb. 1:3). The thought of the writer seems to be fixed on those Old Testament passages in which Jehovah is described as the *Glory*: e.g., *For I, saith Jehovah, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and I will be the Glory in the midst of her* (Zech. 2:5). In the Lord Jesus Christ, James sees the fulfillment of these promises: He is Jehovah come to be with His people; and, as He has tabernacled among them, they have seen His glory. He is, in a word, the Glory of God, the Shekinah: God manifest to men. It is thus that James thought and spoke of his own brother who died a violent and shameful death while still in His first youth! Surely there is a phenomenon here which may well waken inquiry." B. B. Warfield, *The Lord of Glory* (rpt. Baker, 1974), p. 265.