

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Scripture Memory		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	91		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	Matt. 17:1-9; John 1:14; 17:22-24; Heb. 1:1-3		
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BEHOLDING THE GLORY OF CHRIST

Our English word *glory* comes down from the French *glorie*, which in turn comes from the Latin *gloria*, signifying fame, renown, praise or honor. The Hebrew word is *kābôd*, which comes from the root that means “heavy.” This had reference to battle armaments, i.e., heavy weapons and defenses used in battle. When used of God, it underscores that He is strong and mighty. In the figurative sense it designates someone who is a weighty person in society, someone who is honorable, impressive, worthy of respect.¹ The Greek word for glory is *doxa*, and this also focused attention on the opinion held by others of a person worthy of respect and honor.²

- I. **SEEING THE GLORY.** Note the language in John 1:14, “and we *beheld* his glory.” Likewise in John 17:24, “... so that they may *see* my glory.” In the Old Testament we read in Exodus 16:7, “and in the morning you shall *see* the glory of The LORD.” Glory is something that is seen. “L. Hurtado traces *the glory* to the shining of the Face of God to his people: ‘The Jewish exegetes of the early Christian centuries, who were doing their theologizing at the period of the great Christological controversies in the Church, developed a noun, *Shechinah*, from this Hebrew verb, *to dwell*, and used it to describe this indwelling of the Face of God in the midst of Israel.’ The Jewish/Christian audience that read the Gospel of John would have immediately thought of the glory-cloud that was over the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and at times came down into the Temple of Jerusalem, as at Solomon’s dedication (1 Kings 8:10,11). Glory is connected with God’s face, and indeed, conveyed its holy brightness to the face of Moses, so that his shining countenance frightened the people when he came down from God’s immediate presence on Mount Sinai (cf. Exod. 34:29-35). The Apostle Paul connects this glory that radiated from Moses to the face of Christ, by which, as we behold it in faith, we become transformed into his image *from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord* (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18). And Hebrews 1:3 (to be studied in detail presently) speaks of Christ as *being the brightness of [God’s] glory*. . . Ezekiel saw the glory leaving the soon-to-be destroyed Temple (cf. Ezek. 10 and 11). But John sees the glory coming back in him whom Tabernacle and Temple represented: namely, the Word made flesh. Jesus’ glory is portrayed throughout John’s Gospel, especially in his miracles. The glory was seen after Christ’s first miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding of Cana: *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him (John 2:11)*. It was seen many other times, especially at his resurrecting of Lazarus from the dead: *When Jesus*

heard that [i.e., Lazarus' critical illness], he said, *This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby . . . Jesus said unto her [Martha], Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?* (John 11:4, 40). Yes, perhaps surprisingly to us, John shows that Christ's glory is supremely revealed when he was lifted up on the cross: *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified* (John 12:23); *Therefore when [Judas] was gone out [from the Last Supper], Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him* (John 13:31-32). But after the crucifixion and burial of *the Lord of glory* (1 Cor. 2:8), Paul tells us that *Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father* (Rom. 6:4). Thus Christ's high priestly prayer was beginning to be fulfilled, so that his people might behold the glory he had with the Father before the world existed (cf. John 17:24)."³

- II. **THE RESTORED GLORY.** The glory Jesus speaks about in 17:24 is the glory He had with the Father *before* the world began. Hebrews 1:1-3 speaks of Christ as the radiance of His (the Father's) glory. Warfield writes, "He is the repetition of God's glory: the reiteration of His substance. By the *glory of God* is meant here just the divine nature itself, apprehended in its splendor: and by its *effulgence* is meant not a reflection, but, so to speak, a reduplication of it. The *Son* is just God over again in the glory of His majesty."⁴ What was this glory? It was the totality of all the divine attributes. In John's gospel, as Liddon points out, "Thus the Word reveals the Divine Essence; His Incarnation makes that Life, that Love, that Light, which is eternally resident in God, obvious to souls that steadily contemplate Himself. These terms, Life, Love, Light – so abstract, so simple, so suggestive – meet in God; but they meet also in Jesus Christ. They do not only make Him the centre of a philosophy. They belong to the mystic language of faith more truly than to the abstract terminology of speculative thought. They draw hearts to Jesus; they invest Him with a higher than any intellectual beauty. The Life, the Love, the Light, are the *glory* of the Word Incarnate which His disciples *beheld*, pouring its rays through the veil of His human tabernacle. The Light, the Love, the Life, constitute the *fulness* whereof His disciples received. Herein is comprised that entire body of grace and truth, by which the Word Incarnate gives to men the right to become the sons of God. . . Taken together they exhibit Christ before His Incarnation as at once personally distinct from, and yet equal with, the Father; He is That personally subsisting and *Eternal Life, Which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.*"⁵

CONCLUSION: John Owen, in his masterful work on the glory of Christ, wrote: "In his divine person absolutely considered, he is the essential image of God, even the Father. He is in the Father, and the Father in him, in the unity of the same divine essence, John 14:10. Now he is *with the Father*, John 1:1, in the distinction of his person, so is he his essential image, Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3. In his incarnation he becomes the representative image of God unto the Church, 2 Cor. 4:6; without whom our understandings can make no such approach unto the divine excellencies but that God continues to be unto us what he is in himself – the *invisible God*. In the face of Jesus Christ we see his glory. This is the original glory of Christ, given him by his Father, and which by faith we may behold. He, and he alone, declares, represents, and makes known, unto angels and men, the essential glory of the

invisible God, his attributes and his will; without which, a perpetual comparative darkness would have been on the whole creation, especially that part of it here below. This is the foundation of our religion, the Rock whereon the church is built, the ground of all our hopes of salvation, of life and immortality: all is resolved into this – namely, the *representation* that is made of the nature and will of God in the person and office of Christ. If this fail us, we are lost for ever; if this Rock stand firm, the church is safe here, and shall be triumphant hereafter.”⁶ Finally, Ross points out that Christ’s glory had been seen by the apostles. “But did they not behold this glory already? Assuredly they did by faith. And it is indeed a solemn truth, that none shall behold his glory by sight in heaven, that do not first behold it by faith on earth. Some beheld this glory before he came in the flesh (John 8:56, 12:41). Some beheld it by faith while he tabernacled upon earth (1:14). And some behold it now, though he is in heaven and they upon the earth (2 Cor. 3:18). But the beholding mentioned in the text is something higher, nearer than all this. This is the *beatific* vision to which they shall attain when he has gathered them home to be for ever with himself. And if the vision on *the holy mount* was so sweet, if the attractions of that moment were so ravishing that Peter said, *It is good for us to be here*, what shall it be to behold the countless unfoldings of this glory throughout eternity? Indeed, it will be no mere vision, for we shall be like him, when we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2). It is impossible to behold this glory, and to remain a mere spectator of it. To behold it is to *partake* of it – to become a *sharer* with him in his glory. Then shall be fulfilled the words: *And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them*. This is the height to which Jesus elevates his Church. Having raised his spouse from the mire, from the midst of a world immersed in evil, he introduces her into the sphere of his own Glory, and places her down with himself upon his throne.”⁷

ENDNOTES

¹ cf. the extended discussion in *Theological Wordbook of The Old Testament* I, eds. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, B. K. Waltke (Moody, 1980), pp. 426-427.

² cf. discussion in L. O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Zondervan, 1985), p. 371.

³ D. F. Kelly, *Systematic Theology* II (Mentor Books, 2014), p. 156.

⁴ B. B. Warfield, *The Lord of Glory: A Study of The Designation of Our Lord in The New Testament with Special Reference To His Deity* (rpt. Baker, 1974), p. 279.

⁵ H. P. Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord* (rpt. Klock & Klock, 1978), pp. 235-237.

⁶ *The Works of John Owen* I (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1976), p. 294.

⁷ Charles Ross, *The Inner Sanctuary: An Exposition of John 13-17* (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1967), p. 244.