

# What Does the Bible Say about . . . ?

December 2, 2009

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## . . . The Glory of God

### I. Announcements

- A. Open with prayer
- B. Any new people? If so, summarize need to bring paper, pen, and Bible (various versions helpful for comparison, but NRSV will be main one for reading, NASB for studying)
- C. Get list of names and how to contact (email preferred)
- D. 90 minutes on 1st Wednesdays at 7 p.m.
- E. Need volunteers to read passages listed in **bold**.
- F. Does anyone have any questions/topics for us to consider for next time?

### II. Introduction and Review

- A. Last time we looked at the question of whether animals have an afterlife, and we saw that the only way to answer that was by understanding the character of God.
  1. What things do you recall from then, or from Scripture, that we learned about who God is and that gives us some guidance in answering that question?
  2. As we said last time, all of our studies are really about God. This time, it will be especially so.
- B. We are rapidly approaching Christmas, and again hearing the familiar words of Scripture.
  1. The gospel of Luke begins by telling us the amazing events of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. We read of angels – angels! – appearing to shepherds out in the fields, and singing “Glory to God in the highest!”
  2. Glory to God. The oft-heard words roll off our lips easily, but tonight we are going to stop and think about them a little more carefully.
  3. We're going to ask questions.
  4. What is God's glory? How is God glorified? And how *do* we give glory to God, if we can at all?
- C. There's a lot that can be said, and tonight we will only scratch the surface.
  1. We will spend most of our time in the Old Testament, because that's where the story begins, and that's where we could most easily get confused.
  2. I hope that by the time we finish our study, we will find some answers, and that the answers will be – glorious.

### III. Old Testament revelation of God's glory.

- A. It's been a long time since I've mentioned this, but there is an important principle for studying the Bible that's known as “progressive revelation.”
  1. Quite simply what this means is that God has progressively revealed more of the truth over time.
  2. Therefore, while the Old Testament and the New Testament are consistent with each other, we learn more about God and God's plan in the

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New Testament than we could know from the Old Testament alone.

Things become progressively more specific and more clear.

3. **Can someone think of an example of this? Is there something you can recall that is hinted at in the Old Testament that becomes clear in the New?** (hint: think of Christmas, e.g. Micah 5:2-4 and Matt 2:1-6)

B. The Hebrew word in the Old Testament for “glory” is *kabod* (כָּבוֹד). It’s a word that can also mean honor, abundance, or wealth. The root meaning of the word is heaviness or weight, worthiness.

1. **How do you think “glory” or “honor” can be related to weight? Any ideas?**

2. Consider this: **In an ancient marketplace, how was the value of something determined?** (By weighing it. The heavier it was, the more the item was worth. A shekel, for example, was an ancient coin used in Israel and elsewhere, but it was actually a prescribed weight. The coin had to weigh a shekel to be worth a shekel<sup>1</sup>)

3. **How is the meaning of weight and value related to honor?** (Discuss. Remember, this is not necessarily what the relationship *should* be, but what it often is.)

C. In the Old Testament, then, glory/*kabod* is sometimes used in a more mundane way to refer to physical wealth.

1. For example, in Genesis 30, Jacob outsmarted his father-in-law, Laban and tricked Laban out of most of his flock of sheep.

2. In 31:1, Laban’s sons complain that Jacob has gotten all his *kabod* from their father.

D. But the most important way glory is spoken of in the Old Testament is as a quality of God. And there are times when God’s glory, too, seems to take on a visible presence.

1. But that’s a problem, isn’t it? **What happens if someone sees God’s glory?**

2. **Exodus 33:18-20** (Can’t see God’s glory and live.) We’ll come back to this again later.

E. Despite this, there are many places where God’s glory is described with the visible presence of fire and a cloud. The first mention of God leading the people of Israel out of Egyptian slavery by a pillar of cloud each day and a pillar of fire at night is in Exodus 13:21-22. But we’ll start a bit later.

1. **Exodus 16:9-10.** This is at a time when the people were complaining about their food. **What do we see about God’s glory here? Do the people see God’s glory?** (No, God’s glory is *in* the cloud, not the cloud itself.)

2. A little while later Moses himself describes what happened when he received the 10 Commandments and the glory of God was present. **Deut 5:22-25** (fire and cloud, fear of death at Mt. Sinai - refers to Exodus 19:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shekel>

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18-21.) **What do the people say about God's glory?** (that Moses showed it to them) **But what did they actually see?** (v.22, cloud, fire, gloom) **And where did the voice of God come from?** (the fire) **Had the actual substance of God's glory truly been seen?** (not clear, probably not)

3. In Exodus 24:9-11 those who were especially consecrated to go onto the mountain with Moses were said to have seen God. But no real description is given, so we can't exactly how this was or what they really meant.

4. A few verses later, though, we again encounter the fire and the cloud.

**Ex. 24:15-18. What do we observe about God's glory here?** (glory rests on the mountain; cloud covers the mountain) **Is the cloud God's glory?**

5. As we continue to follow God's glory through Exodus, we arrive at the Tabernacle. **Can anyone tell us what that is?** (A tent version of a temple. The central place to worship God.)

6. **Exodus 40:34-35. One more time, then, what does this tell us about the glory of God and the cloud?** (Tabernacle is filled with God's glory, but cloud keeps Moses out).

7. We've looked at four different events in which the glory of God was present and the people saw a cloud. **What do these have in common?**

**When the people saw the cloud, were they seeing the glory of God?**

8. Just for good measure, let's look forward in time several generations to the time of King Solomon and read about when the first Temple was dedicated in Jerusalem. **1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8: 5-6, 10-11**

9. Once more we have the cloud. **And what does it do? In every case, then, was the role of the cloud?** (It obscures, hides the glory of God).

10. And if a cloud obscures, what does a fire do? (Destroys, purifies – and keeps us away.)

11. **So what is the message about God, God's glory, and our access to either or both?** (Write list on board "God's Glory in OT" – cloud: God's glory is hidden; fire: God's glory is dangerous to sinners)

12. This is our first lesson in the Old Testament about God and God's glory. Approaching God is no easy thing; in fact it can be truly terrifying. Some say "all roads lead to God." I think they are making very dangerous presumptions.

IV. There are other hints and layers of meaning in the Old Testament about the glory of God.

A. Remember back in Exodus 33 when Moses wanted to see the glory of God?

Let's look at it again more closely. **Exodus 33: 18-20.**

1. There's a hint here that God's glory is not all about smoke and fire, but something else entirely.

2. **Moses asked to see God's glory, and how did God reply?** (Add to list: goodness, compassion, grace)

3. And a chapter later when Moses goes to get the 10 Commandments for the second time, God's is present in a cloud, bringing to mind God's glory

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yet again. **What does God say? What does this hint to us about God's glory? Exodus 34:5-8**

4. Let's put this on the board too. God's glory is seen in God's character, God's own self. (add to list: compassion, grace, slow to anger, full of loving kindness and truth)

5. It's starting to sound a lot like the New Testament, isn't it?

B. And that's where we are heading next, but first let's look for a moment at what Old Testament prophecy says about God's glory.

1. **Isaiah 40:3-5. What is going to change about God's glory?** (It will be revealed.)

2. **Isaiah 60:1-6.** The glory of the Lord has come, verse 1 tells us. **What is that glory?** ("The Lord will rise upon you.") **As we look at all 6 verses, does anything sound familiar?** (e.g., camels, gold, frankincense)

3. Let's add these to the list too. (Add to list: will be revealed, will come to you.)

4. Now it's time to turn to the New Testament as we follow the trail of God's glory.

V. In the New Testament<sup>2</sup> things change. Much more is revealed about God's glory.

A. The New Testament speaks of glory in a number of different ways, including calling the kingdom of God the place of glory (what we sometimes call "heaven"). Glory is also used more generically to mean splendor or grandeur, but we are going to focus on perhaps some less familiar aspects of its meaning.

B. Let's turn to the angels announcement of Jesus' birth. **Luke 2:8-14**

1. **Where is the cloud? Where is the fire? What has happened, and what does it mean?** (no longer hidden, no longer obscured, glory revealed)

2. **In light of the prophecies from Isaiah, now what do the angels mean, "Glory to God?" What has brought glory to God? And why?**

3. Make a New Testament list on board: "Jesus brings glory to God by ..."

4. 1<sup>st</sup> item on the list: his birth.

C. **Matthew 17:1-8.** See anything familiar here that we now associate with the glory of God? (the cloud)

1. Moses' face was shining after he returned from receiving the 10 Commandments. **Compare that to what we see here.** (Jesus shining all over, glorified)

2. **Now in the presence of the glory of God, where is the focus? Where do we see God's glory?** (Dramatic power of verse 8: They saw no one, but Jesus alone.)

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A. <sup>2</sup> The New Testament writers didn't choose a word meaning weight or bright light, but a neutral Greek word, *doxa*, (**δόξα**), which simply means reputation, or opinion. It is used to translate *kabod*. In the New Testament it is always used to signify a good or praiseworthy opinion.

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3. Add to the list: his transfiguration
- D. The Gospel of John focuses a lot on this question of glory. Let's look at three of them from Jesus' time of ministry on earth.
1. **John 2:11** (by his first sign at Cana) **How is Jesus glorified by this?**
  2. **John 11:38-44**. **What is the glory here?** (God glorified by Jesus raising Lazarus raising the tomb; Jesus brings life)
  3. **John 17:4-5**. **How is the glory of God seen in Jesus?** (Jesus' prayer. Glorified God by doing all he was sent to do.)
  4. Add to the list: his obedience to God's will.
- E. **John 12:20-23, 27-28** (Jesus asks God to glorify him)
1. **What is it now that glorifies God?** (Jesus death on the cross)
  2. **How can torture and death bring glory to God? What is there about Jesus' crucifixion death that can possibly be, in any way, glorious?** (e.g., his obedience, his winning forgiveness for humankind)
  3. Add to the list: his death
- F. **Acts 1:1-5, 9-11**. (Jesus ascension in a cloud) We find something familiar here, that often is seen in connection with the glory of God. **What is it?** (the cloud)
1. **But now, who is in the cloud?** (Jesus)
  2. **Acts 3:11-16 – esp. v. 13** (Jesus glorified by God) After Jesus' resurrection, two of the disciples healed a disabled man, but they don't take credit themselves. **They point to whom? And what do they say about him?** (glorified)
  3. **1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:16**. Here is one of the earliest known confessions of faith. Jesus was taken up in glory.
  4. Up to now we have spoken about the glory of God. **But since Jesus' resurrection, what has happened?**
  5. Add to the list: his resurrection/ascension
- G. **Mark 13:24-26** (see also Mark 8: 38). **What is being spoken of here?**
1. **How does Jesus arrive?** (in clouds) **Sound familiar? What's the symbolic meaning?** (glory of God)
  2. **And what are we told about this glory?** (*great* glory)
  3. Here at last, at last, the full glory of God arrives.
  4. Add to the list: his return
- H. God is glorified by Jesus' birth, his transfiguration, his faithful obedient ministry on earth, his death, his resurrection, and his spectacular return.
1. **Hebrews 1:1-3a** (the radiance of God's glory)
  - 2.
  3. **John 1:14** (glory as of the only begotten son of the Father)
  4. And 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:6 tells us that God's glory is in the face of Jesus.

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VI. After all of this, how can we, mere flawed mortals, hope to glorify God?

A. There are many passages we could look at, and I've put some references in the notes, but I don't want this to simply be an academic exercise.

1. Instead, let's end with something to think about for our daily lives.
2. **When we were children, how did we bring glory to our parents?**
3. **How do we bring glory and honor to our spouses and families now?**
4. **How can we glorify our Church?**
5. **If Jesus is God's glory, how do we follow in his footsteps to bring glory to Jesus and glory to God?**

B. The glory of God is no longer hidden by a cloud or anything else. God's glory is no longer a terror for those who have been consecrated by our obedient faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus has been revealed as God's glory, and *we* can be *his* glory . . .

1. by our rebirth through trusting Jesus,
2. by all that we do as Jesus showed us,
3. by all that we say that honors our Lord,
4. by all that we believe that is true about Jesus,
5. and by being faithful to Jesus to the end of our lives
6. May each of us look to Jesus and add our voices to those of the angels.
7. "Glory to God in the highest."

VII. Summary

A. Have we answered today's questions satisfactorily? Are there still questions on this topic we need to discuss more? What questions for next time?

B. Next meeting: **Wednesday, February 3, 2010. 7:00 p.m.**

C. Closing prayer

D. Archives of class notes can be found online at:

[www.fumcwa.org/classes/wdbsa](http://www.fumcwa.org/classes/wdbsa)

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### VIII. Further references on the glory of God.

- A. Philippians 1:9-11. By our faith, righteousness
- B. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:15-16. By suffering without being “ashamed” of Christ.
- C. Romans 15:1-2, 7. By accepting each other as Christ accepted us.
- D. Ephesians 1:11-12. We who believe in him are to his glory.
- E. **Joshua 7:1, 19** (Achan took booty from the battle for himself that were forbidden - Joshua 6:17-19.) What did Joshua mean by “give glory to the Lord?”
- F. 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 6:1-5 Philistines to give glory to God by guilt offering. Recognizes God’s authority over their own godlets.
- G. John 9:13-16, 24 Pharisees tell formerly blind man to give glory to God
- H. Luke 17:18 Jesus asks why other nine healed lepers don’t give glory to God.
- I. Phil 2:10 every knee bow, to the glory of the Father
- J. Revelation 14:6-7. Give glory to God, worship.
- K. Acts 4:13-21. Peter and John heal disabled man and people glorify God. Why? Because of what they did. Obedience to God. Our actions for others in the name of Jesus bring glory to God.
- L. Glory of God is to be seen in the church – 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:3-6
- M. Glory of the new covenant 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3:7-11
- N. Glory shared by those who suffer in Christ – 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:14, Romans 8:18,
- O. Church is to see the world acknowledges the glory which is God’s – Romans 15:9 and in God’s deeds – Acts 4:21 – and in God’s disciples – 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:20 – and in Jesus – Romans 16:27
- P. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:31 – do all for the glory of God. How? What is it?
- Q. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:40-43 – different kinds of glory
- R. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:15-17 - thanks and affliction changing us for an eternal glory. i.e., glory is becoming like God in character.
- S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:23 – messengers for the churches are a glory to Christ
- T. 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 2:20 – how are people Paul’s glory?
- U. physical/spiritual – Isaiah 6:1-4 a vision of God in the temple and the temple filled with smoke
- V. don’t boast in wisdom, might, or riches, but in knowing God – Jeremiah 9:23-24 (not the same word “glory” here, but idea is the same)
- W. glory of Israel is not armies, but God Jeremiah 2:11
- X. Glory of God to be known throughout the world Numbers 14:21-22, Psalm 57:11, 96:3
- Y. We were made to be the glory of God – 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:7
- Z. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3:7-11, 18 (we are being transformed from one glory to another)