

Glory, what is it and how it shows itself

Part 1

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[00:00:00] I hope to spend a little time this afternoon thinking about glory, what it is and the ways in which it shows itself.

I think we often use terms, good terms, scriptural terms, and we have a fair idea of what's involved in the terms, and yet if someone asks us to put it into words, we don't find it so easy to do so.

I think glory is one of those terms.

I think most of us have been present at Bible readings or discussions where a very difficult question is asked, and the answer is given, well, it's one of those things, it's better [00:01:05] felt than told.

And perhaps one or two of us have been present where that kind of answer has been given to that kind of question, and a further remark has been added, well that may be so, but now is the time to tell it.

And I feel that perhaps this may be the sort of occasion where we should think a little about this term glory.

Now if we started off by looking in an English dictionary, I think we would get certain impressions to add to our general feel of the term.

We would be advised that it includes such things as honour, renown, fame, and it's the opposite kind of consideration to the term shame, and sometimes we learn by opposites.

[00:02:02] But if we go from there to a Bible dictionary or a lexicon, we'll find out some comments on the usage of the term in the scriptures, which is much more helpful to us. And we would read this kind of thing.

It involves the expression of an opinion which is formed by an impression gained by consideration of a matter. Well, again, these are generalisations, and it's very difficult, obviously, to put the thing into words.

But over the years, we hear comments from brethren, we read books, and we think about it, and we form lasting impressions. I suppose the most concise description, if not definition, of glory that most

of us have heard is the one that says that glory is manifested excellence, or if we want to be a bit more [00:03:07] alliterative, we might say displayed excellence. Now, I think we've all thought about this kind of term, and we've developed our own way of thinking about it and developing expressions that put our thoughts into words. I remember in my early days of being interested in the scriptures hearing something like this.

Glory is that manifested quality which throws into relief the excellence of the one whose quality it is. Now, that's a good expression, and it's worth thinking about. And it certainly poses in my mind the question that I'm never quite sure in my own mind whether glory refers to the inherent quality or the manifestation of that quality. [00:04:04] In other words, it's involved with what's inside inherently coming out in an expression and being appreciated by someone else. And I find it difficult to decide in my own mind whether it's the possession of the quality, the quality itself, or the manifestation of it when it comes out. Now we'll be looking at one or two scriptures which confirm that it's not easy to draw a borderline. It's not necessary. It's not essential. If in so doing our thoughts are guided to study the scriptures and to get some lasting impression of things that we need to know about our blessed Lord and saviour, about the God whom we know as a saviour God, any meditation that we might spend, any time that we might spend will be time well spent.

But this, I suppose, can be developed even further. [00:05:04] I read the verses in Corinthians merely to draw attention to the fact that as there are different kinds of bodies, so there are different kinds of glories.

And while this might be seen in a variety of ways in the scriptures, when we come to think about the Lord, Jesus, in particular, we see that there are many ways in which his glory shines out. Now if there was time, and there isn't this afternoon, although perhaps if the Lord will there might be opportunity to develop some of these things locally in the next few days. If there was time, we could think of the pairs of expressions that come into scripture, like the God of glory and the glory of God, the Father of glory and the glory of the Father, [00:06:01] the Spirit of glory, and we may well ponder why there is nothing said in an objective way about the glory of the Spirit.

Certainly we would want to spend time thinking about the Lord of glory and the glory of the Lord, and so on, and eventually we might think of such terms as the glory of Christ and the glory of the King and the King of glory, that kind of thought, and these are things that are well worth following up. But I think for this afternoon we'll just spend a little while on things that are related to and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in so doing, I would like to use three terms which are not found as such in scripture, but they put our thoughts into expression in a neat way. In other words, I would like to spend a little time thinking about the personal glory of [00:07:03] the Lord Jesus, a little time thinking of the moral glory of our Lord Jesus, and a little time perhaps about his official glory, because these are three ways in which scripture comments and the thoughts are there even if the words aren't. His personal glory, his moral glory, and his official glory. Now just to fit that in to the expression that was used earlier, I think we could have a thought in our minds to test in the light of scripture.

It's the only way. We don't test scripture against our favourite definitions. We test the words that we use, we stand it against the plumb line of scripture, and that is the only valid test. Now the things that I would like to test against scripture is this kind of expression. It may be valid to consider that the personal glory of the Lord Jesus refers to those manifested [00:08:09] personal qualities which throw

into relief his personal excellence.

His moral glory may be considered to be those manifested moral qualities which throw into relief his moral excellence.

And his official glory could be considered to be those manifested official qualities which throw into relief his official excellence. First of all, his personal excellence. And in simple words, his personal glory considers who he is.

It considers his person, things that are personal to him. And for that, among others, I would like to turn you to John's Gospel and Chapter 1.

[00:09:05] In being careful not to bite off more than we can chew, the references we can make are limited.

But let us start with John's Gospel, Chapter 1, Verse 1, and then read from the end of Verse 1, begin again at Verse 14, to get the sense.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Verse 18, no man hath seen God at any time.

The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

If John's Gospel is about anything at all, it's about God revealing himself, God declaring [00:10:02] himself, God telling us about himself.

And this is why the term Word is used.

The term not only involves that which fairly and fully expresses the heart of God as a Word gives expression to our thoughts, it does not only involve what is said, but the term also involves that the one who is referred to is himself the expression of the thought. Now, we need to have that kind of thought in our mind when we consider the prologue to the Gospel by John.

Here then God is expressing himself. He's manifesting himself. He's revealing himself. Now, I suppose the kind of words we use, which Scripture uses, are the kind of phrase that [00:11:02] help us along the way of saying he is manifesting his glory. He's telling us about himself. He's helping us to gain an impression of who he is, the kind of God that he is. In fact, when we come to chapter 2, we read in verse 11 that the Lord Jesus, in turning the water into wine, it is said of that occasion that this beginning of signs did Jesus incarnate of Galilee and manifested forth his glory. The thought of manifestation, revelation, showing forth what's inside, being brought out, is obviously very close to this thought of manifestation and glory. And in order that that might happen, in order that it might occur, we read that the word became flesh.

That's all I want to say about that, but let us repeat it as we move on. It is God's intention that man should be brought into an intelligent appreciation of who God [00:12:06] is. And the Lord Jesus, the one spoken of here as the Word, he's the only one who is fully competent to reveal God, the only one who's fit to manifest God, to show him forth because he is God.

Now that's what the prologue of the Gospel of John has to say to us. Now, I think we might well turn to chapter 11.

Just for an example of the many from Scripture, chapter 11, verse 40.

Again, relative to one of the signs in John's Gospel, the raising of Lazarus, Jesus said unto Martha, said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see [00:13:05] the glory of God. Now that's typical of the kind of thing that punctuates the Gospel, that demonstrates that not only did the Lord Jesus come into the world to manifest the glory of God, to reveal God, who he is, to manifest him forth, he not only came to do that, he did it. And he did it, as recorded in the four Gospels, particularly the Gospel of John. Now, as we leave this point, let us turn to Hebrews chapter 1.

As we know, the three chapters which tell us so much about the personal glory of the Lord Jesus, John 1, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 1.

Well, we haven't time to look at Colossians 1, but we'll look a little at Hebrews 1. Hebrews 1, verse 1, God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past [00:14:07] unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they, for unto which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee, and again, I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. Now, if we want to follow up two lines of study which tell us so plainly about the personal [00:15:12] glory of the Lord Jesus, we should look at the terms only begotten and firstborn.

We read in John 1, 14 and 18, two of the verses which speak of the Lord Jesus as the only begotten, five in all in the writings of the New Testament.

What can we say about the Lord Jesus that confirms what we think about him?

And we think these things about him because it's the way scripture presents him to our hearts in the power of the Spirit. There's only one thing that sums up completely who the Lord Jesus is and the person that he is, and that is this. [00:16:02] He is absolutely unique.

There's no one like him. All remember that first impression we had of him when we came to him in our need to have our sins forgiven because we wanted to be right with God.

Deep in our distress, we learned that there's no one like him. He's absolutely unique. Oh, our first impression is the impression that we need to retain, that there's no one like him, no one like he.

And this term only begotten in the scriptures where it is used and in the context where each of the occurrences lie confirm this impression to us. When we turn to the term first begotten, first born, we are impressed again and again by the context of the five occurrences that it tells us about the personal dignity, the personal majesty, and in whatever setting he is considered that necessarily he must be right at the pinnacle.

[00:17:10] He must have the first ranking place because of who he is. Altogether apart from what he does. And when we come to Hebrews chapter one, we get expressions like that. Several spheres in which the Lord Jesus is introduced.

And we learn in Hebrews one in the opening verses that whatever the context, whatever sphere in which the Lord Jesus is considered, that necessarily he must have the first ranking place because of who he is.

If we read Hebrews one superficially, we might come to the conclusion that the matters considered are what he has done and what he is doing and what he is going to do. [00:18:01] But if we read more carefully, I think we'll come to the conclusion it's not so much a matter of what he has done, what he's going to do, or what he has done. But rather it's his personal competence to do it.

And the emphasis is on who he is, rather than what he has done, is do, or is about to do. For instance, look at the words, well as it starts, God has progressively revealed himself. He's spoken in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. But now he has spoken unto us in these last days in his son.

This is really to be considered in the light of the true things of the gospel by John, isn't it?

Where we learn again that the final revelation of God has come to light in the person of [00:19:02] his son.

And because he is the son, and because he is God, he's the only one who's fit in John's gospel to manifest God, to declare God, and in Hebrews, he's the only one who's fit to speak for God.

God hath spoken in these last days in the person of his son.

And then in the various spheres that are mentioned, it's seen that he, because of who he is, is the only one to take on these responsibilities, whom he hath appointed heir of all things. If there is an inheritance involved, and there is, the only one who's right to take that place is the son, because of who he is. If creation is referred to by whom also he made the worlds, he is the only one who was competent and fit to bring the worlds into being because of who he is. [00:20:04] And again, this is in the context of his being the only one who's fit to speak for God because he is God.

Notice again, chapter one, verse one and two, God hath spoken. Chapter two, we learn in the same phraseology, the things which began to be spoken by the Lord. And in chapter three, as the Holy Ghost saith. And then in the light of that, the challenge comes at the end of the epistle that we have to take heed and respond and obey to what has been said to us. But in these opening verses, they would well merit our study, who being the brightness of his glory, the outshining.

I would add this to the list of scriptures we need to meditate on. If we want to come to a conclusion as to whether it is the personal qualities themselves or whether it is the shining out of these qualities, light, shining, are almost always somewhere [00:21:06] in the context where glory is spoken about. And here again, he is the shining out in his own person of the glory of God. The expression of the substance of God. Not only the creator, but the upholder of all things because of who he is. The only one who is fit to take upon himself purgation for sins.

And so we have it, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.

Write these down sometime, all these expressions, and put against each of them who else could be considered fit to take upon himself for God the expression of these things, the performance of these things and the carrying of them out. And we would come to the conclusion that the Lord Jesus, because in John's language is [00:22:05] absolutely unique.

The one who is fit to express God because he is God, that here he is the only one who is competent to take on these mighty tasks which have to be performed. Now would you turn please, just for a moment, to Luke's Gospel and chapter 9.

The difficulty with this kind of consideration is the vastness of the list of scriptures that might be referred to.

I would like to consider for a few minutes the so-called transfiguration scene. Luke 9, and I want to read without, there's not time for much development of the thought, but if there is in the Gospels a section which gives us just a little glimpse, just [00:23:09] a little preview of the official glory of the Lord Jesus, it is this picture of the kingdom in embryo form that the Lord Jesus privileged some of the disciples to see.

Now notice the verses in the section that I read that confirm that. Much might be gained by comparing side by side Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9.

And when we are considering the transfiguration, this exaltation in a very prominent way of the Lord Jesus, we need to remember that there's no need for the transfiguration scene in the Gospel by John because no exaltation is possible for the one who was spoken of as ever dwelling [00:24:02] in the bosom of the Father, the Son of Man who is in heaven, and so on. But here in the synoptic Gospels, we get these little pictures, and there are nice little additions commensurate with the consideration and the major aspect of the Gospel. Look at Luke 9, and I'll read for completeness from verse 22.

The Lord Jesus speaking, the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day. And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

For what is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world and lose himself or be cast away? [00:25:06] For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory, and in his father's, and of the holy angels. Now here, against this background of the rejection of the coming King who has presented himself, and for the full development of that thought, we need to consider the whole of the scope of Matthew's Gospel. But here in Luke, tribute is paid to the fact that the one who has been rejected, the one who has passed on to those who are true to him the need for discipleship by those who are left behind after the King has been rejected, his subjects who desire to remain true to him. He said, there is a time coming when the Son of Man will be revealed, when he shall [00:26:06] come in his own glory.

Oh, I think perhaps that would include his personal glory.

And when we come a few verses further down, we're going to read on, let us consider the fact, particularly in the Gospel by Luke, that's the Gospel where in a remarkable way his moral glory is emphasised.

Very very difficult to say what is moral, isn't it? It involves sober consideration of what is right before God, which will involve the sober consideration of that which is obnoxious to God.

If we read further on in Hebrews 1, we get something of the distinctness of his moral perfection, his moral glory coming out. [00:27:03] It is said of the Lord Jesus prophetically, amply demonstrated in his life upon earth, thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

See both sides, follow that which is good and depart from that which is iniquity, again and again the two things are put together. But in a positive way, we notice how these happy features of the result of the assessment of what is right before God, what is obnoxious to God, was demonstrated in the life that Jesus lived on earth in the days of his flesh. And of course Luke's Gospel amplifies that kind of thought. But as we come to verse 27, he says, I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God. Now we are getting to that which is official. [00:28:02] There are many offices, there are many functions that the Lord Jesus is performing now and he's competent to do so and God has seen fit to declare that it is right that the one who fills out all these offices to the glory of God, that his glory, his name might be seen and fully revealed and in order that we might be blessed. I suppose our thoughts could compile quite a long list of the offices of the Lord Jesus referred to in the New Testament where he is demonstrably the only one who as before God and man is fit to take up these offices. And one of these is the office of king, which will be seen universally in the world to come of which scripture speaks. But he says here there are some present who will still be on earth when they are given [00:29:09] a view of the kingdom and then immediately we learn and the other Gospels confirm the same story, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, that about in eight days, another reference to a new start, something new is going to be brought in and the moral perfection of the Lord Jesus to be the one to bring in this new realm before God is seen in the humility and the express dependence that is referred to in verse 29. As he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered. We get the words transformed, transfigured, changed in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9.

[00:30:03] We get the word transformed in Romans 12 and we might have just a moment on that and then again for completeness 2 Corinthians 3 where we get the word changed.

Same word that is used, same thought behind it, that what is seen on the outside takes character from that which is inside. Oh, what an important principle. We're going to come to it in just a moment, but let us see it here. That which was seen in Christ here upon earth in the perfection of his manhood, it came out because the perfection was there to start with. We are getting back a little bit to consider what the word or the term glory involves. It's the expression of something that is already there. And here was found in perfect manhood on earth the Lord Jesus Christ who demonstrated in [00:31:04] the days of his flesh that he was the one who was fit to take up every office which he will fill out because he was not only personally fit, he was morally fit because of who he is, because of what he is.

Morally perfect, he's the one who was fit to take up these offices. And I like to think that only in Luke

do we get the expression, he shall come in his own glory, and only in Luke, relative to the transfiguration scene, do we get the expression that he prayed for tribute to his moral perfection, that his perfect manhood is seen, demonstrated, and it just shows that glory, while it involves a demonstration, may not be one of outward show or ostentation as we speak of it.

[00:32:01] It may be subdued, it may be a moral demonstration, even in the lives that are lived. Now, while much more might be said about that, let us turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 2. To read a verse, 1 Corinthians chapter 2, 7 verse 7, we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory. Now here's a thought, which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. One of these paradoxical statements in scripture, think of it, the Lord of glory, the one who is fit to reign, the one who is fit to command, because of who he is, his personal glory, [00:33:02] because of what he is, his moral perfection, and yet he allowed cruel men to take him and nail him to the tree, so demonstrating in another way his moral perfection. He was prepared to go all the way that the wisdom of God might be revealed. They would not have crucified the Lord of glory. What was there inherently, inside, was only seen on the outside by those with eyes anointed to see.

To the others, morally blind, spiritually blind, judicially blind, in the case of Israel, nationally blind, without the insight to take account of the things that scripture makes plain to us by the Holy Spirit. But oh, what a paradox, that the one who is the Lord of glory was taken and crucified. [00:34:03] Now move on to the second epistle, chapter three, and the end of the chapter. Second Corinthians, chapter three, verse 18.

We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

One of the most difficult verses in the New Testament.

I only want to take it up in one respect this afternoon. A lot said about glory in this chapter, a lot said about the glory of the Old Covenant, a lot said about the glory of the New Covenant, and then coming to the climax where we are [00:35:07] taught that the New Covenant is what it is because the Lord Jesus personally is the Spirit of that Covenant. We then come to this amazing statement. Coming back to us, and we need to at this stage in the meeting. We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed.

We are privileged in the transfiguration scene to read words that tell us that there was an occasion here in this world when those who were dear to him, his disciples, were privileged to see his glory.

I read the words in Luke, or certainly in the section. It says of the disciples when they woke up, they saw his glory. [00:36:01] Moses wasn't at made that plea. Show me thy glory.

It says of the Peter, James, and John, they saw his glory.

We say, well, of course, they were with him. They accompanied with him for three and a half years. How wonderful for them that must have been. How true.

But for us, it says we have the opportunity, we Christians, of so spending our time in thinking of him, that as that change was seen, that transfiguration was seen when Christ was here upon earth, there

is a moral change produced in the lives of those who contemplate him now.

If you want a verse to substantiate what is often said to us, and rightly so, this is it. You will have heard the expression, a good one. [00:37:01] If we want to be like him where he was, we need to spend time occupied with him where he is.

And this is one of many verses.

We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.

Here it is. We've spoken, we've read of the Lord of glory in the first epistle. That's what he is. This supremacy is seen even in this matter of glory.

But here we learn that as we spend time thinking about him, it is a practical matter to spend a Saturday thinking of him.

I know Christians that say they have too many practical things to do to waste that time thinking about the Bible on a Saturday afternoon. The most practical thing we can do at any time of the week is to spend time thinking of him.

[00:38:01] But if we do that, if we meditate on his personal glories, his moral glories, and his official glories, the Bible says that while we are going to be fully conformed to his image in a day that's yet to be, we will have a progressive moral change produced in our lives. And that's what this verse talks about.

Or there are happy little touches in this verse that we cannot look on now. We need to meditate on them.

But while we might say there are many scriptures which speak of all these glories, it comes back to this, whether or not we feel competent to talk about it, whether or not we can put our thoughts into expression.

Altogether apart from being articulate or being able to think clearly, it says that this change, this moral change, is produced, what an encouragement, to read the scriptures, [00:39:05] to spend time in communion with him, in fellowship with those who are like-minded believers, in order that as we think of him individually and collectively, this moral change is produced. Now we'll have to leave the exercise there for the moment this afternoon, but perhaps it might help to consolidate some of the things we've been thinking about as we sing our closing hymn.