

GLORY to GOD

By

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“And we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14 Read John 1:9-18).

The angels, at Christ’s birth, had good cause to sing “Glory to God in the highest.” They knew that God’s glory is best demonstrated in the grace and truth which came with Jesus.

It is natural, in considering God’s glory, to enumerate His mighty works. “The heavens declare the glory of God.” Indeed the works of God in creation are mighty. From the countless systems in immeasurable space to the function of the microscopic cells of the body, God’s creative wonders are past discovering.

But all of this, as great as it is, can be of little help to man who is living under the curse of sin and stands condemned to death at Judgment. Of what lasting value are the works of creation if, after my three score and ten years. I am to die and leave it all? How can all the glories of creation have meaning for man who is imprisoned by mortality? We see then that beyond all the mighty works of God the most glorious act of all is that of redeeming man. This is the glory, to know that I will be resurrected to live with the Creator forever.

So the Apostle John starts right out with the eternal worth of glory and reports that when he beheld the glory of God in Jesus Christ, he saw the glory of grace and truth. So far as we know, the Apostles spent little or no time at all extolling the accomplishments of men and debating the question of creation. Instead, they presented the one thing without which all else is irrelevant-the means of man’s survival.

GLORY SEEN IN GRACE

“For the law was given through Moses: grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17) The law was explicit: “the soul that sins, it shall die.” Everyone knows that, humanly speaking, there is no escape from death — death is everywhere. To find some way out, men resort to witchcraft, the foolish hope of reincarnation, and the mystic religions of the East, such as Buddhism and Judaism. Whatever hope men place in these is groundless. The law still stands that the wages of sin is death. It is to meet this crucial issue that Jesus came into the world. He “who did no sin, became the dier, standing in for the believer, suffering the Judgment for sin Himself, that the sinner might not die eternally.

This is grace and it is glorious. Men view sin, pollution, slums and crime and try to remake the world by legislation, by education, by manipulation of society by tyrants and Governments; yet how inglorious are the plans of men as seen in the scandals surrounding current welfare operations. However they may be justified, they- cannot’ be said to manifest anything glorious. But redemption in the gospel manifests the glories of

Christ for all to witness and experience. By Christ's dying to meet the penalty for sin and rising again from the dead He not only manifested His own personal glory as victor over it e" most dreadful enemy, death, but He makes it possible for man to share in His glory in four ways: (1) by taking away the burden of guilt that we may know that we are forgiven; (2) by taking away the ultimate penalty of death, for He suffered that death Himself; (3) by giving the individual the privilege of growing into Christ's own likeness, and (4) by the assurance of being given immortality at the Judgment Day. What else could show the glory of our Creator any more than this grace which is given to us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Beholding Christ's glory was not in looking at His human features, nor witnessing the mighty miracles He performed, as glorious as these must have been. Neither is His glory seen in religious institutions, buildings, nor religious pageantry, even if these contribute to our spiritual life. The individual sees Christ's glory in His act of redeeming that individual.

GLORY SEEN IN TRUTH

"The world was made through Him, and the world knew Him not" (John 1:10). He came to His own (the ones created by Him) and His own knew Him not. The modern school teaches the Bible as a human book, the mighty acts of God as myths, and Jesus as a fairy tale. No wonder the youth seek answers from computerized horoscopes, extra sensory perception and illegal drugs. Some educators are alarmed that increasingly more young people are disinterested in school — it's a drag. Colleges are for kicks instead of learning. And what should we expect? The glory of truth is removed when Christ is removed, for only the Creator can give the answers.

Think of the billions of hours and dollars being spent on so-called education. Millions of the taxpayers' dollars are appropriated for Government studies; millions of lives are involved in research and conferences. And all the while Christ has the truth, not only about our lives in this world and how peace is obtained and maintained, but of the goal and ultimate outcome. How foolish the Government and the Government's schools which studiously ignore the laws of God and the purpose of His creation! There can be no right decisions without the right objectives.

"I am the truth," said Jesus. To see the truth in Christ when the world all around is groping in darkness is glory indeed. To the extent that the church fails to focus on these two elements, grace and truth, to that extent it fails to portray the glory of God.

The first prophecy in the Bible is of the conquest of Christ over Satan, -sin and death (Genesis 3:15). All the sacrifices of the Old Testament are types of the final revelation of grace through Jesus' death. The Psalms are filled with praises looking forward to the work of redemption. Even though experiencing the physical manifestations of God's power, the "prophets sought and searched diligently concerning the glory of redemption and prophesied of the grace that should come to us" (1 Peter 1:10). Paul writes that our acceptance of Christ results in "the praise of the glory of His grace" (Ephesians 1:6). He further writes that we (believers) now "sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ

Jesus, that in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace” (Ephesians 2:6-7). It is hard to imagine any thing (even the establishment of a political nation called Israel) that could exceed the glory of redemption.

This grace and truth is manifested in the ordinances of baptism and The Lord’s Supper. We are baptized into Christ’s death and raised from the burial in water to a new life, recipients and products of grace which is revealed in the truth. Alas! There is so much false doctrine in regard to both Christ’s death and the meaning of baptism that the glory of God often is obscured. Only as the simple truth of the gospel is heard and believed can the full glory of the work of God be seen. In the Communion again we portray the glory of Christ’s grace. “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” (1 Corinthians 11:28). It is significant that the only two ceremonies given the church are these two which dramatize the redemption of man to the glory of God.

While the visible glory, which would be more than mortal eyes could bear, is yet to be manifested, this much is clear: Christ’s glory is not that of a political empire, but of a spiritual power, the glory that is seen in a regenerated person. “Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord (and) transformed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such glory is realized now by those who are redeemed. The work of the church is not to glorify men and methods, nor is it to spend time ferreting out all the errors of this sect and that, nor debating over denominational differences; rather, it is to expose Christ’s glory by holding forth His grace and truth in the gospel and in letting all the world know that it is here and available to every believer.

“Glory to God in the highest.”

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