

Studies in Glory #1

The word “glory” is used in many ways in the Bible, and so we will look into these.

Ex. 33:18 – “... I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.” This should be the cry of our hearts!

Examples of God’s Manifest Glory

We often hear of God’s glory referred to as the “shekinah”, meaning the light of God’s presence. The word is Hebrew but is not from the Bible, but from rabbinic sources. Despite that, there are many examples of God’s immediate presence being manifested by intense light, so bright that people cannot be close to it. The Biblical word for glory is ‘kavod’ (rhymes with “ma load”).

- Ex. 16:7, 10 – “And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? ... And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.”
- Ex. 24:16-17 – “And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days ... And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.”
- Ex. 33:18-22 – “And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. ... And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.”
- Ex. 34:29-30 – “And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.”
- Ex. 40:34-35 – “Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.”
- 1 K. 8:10-11 – (at the dedication of Solomon’s temple) “And it came to pass, when the Priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD. So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD.”
- Isa. 6:1-5 – “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims, ... And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. ... Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”
- Mt. 17:1-2 (the Mount of Transfiguration) – “... was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light”
- Jesus in Rev. 1:13-15 – “... one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.”

God's Glory

When God appears in the ways above, his glory is visible, and is described as being brighter than the sun. But ordinarily he "hides himself" (Isa. 45:15 – "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself. O God of Israel, the Saviour."). This is apparently so that we must seek him, and believe by faith. There will come a time (the Day of the LORD) when he will force himself upon this world in a terrifying and open revelation, but then it will be too late for repentance. Currently we who love him must believe without seeing God directly (Jn. 20:29).

Yet he does reveal himself in less intense glory in many ways:

- The glory of his creation

Ps. 8:1, 3-4 – "O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens. ... When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

Ps. 19:1-3 – "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge, There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard."

Ps. 97:6 – "The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory."

Job 38-41 – God responds to Job and shows his glory in the creation and maintenance of all living, as well as the glories of the natural world, as snow, ice, stars, oceans and springs of water, light and darkness, lightning and thunder, rain and dew, and all the wonders of the plant and animal kingdoms.

- The glory of his mighty acts

In the Flood, at the Red Sea, in the giving of manna, the many victories of Israel against overwhelming forces, the destruction of the Assyrian hordes threatening Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign, the miracles of Elijah and Elisha, and of Jesus, God is glorified. His great power is shown and magnified against the oppositions of men.

Ps. 2:1-4 – "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed ... He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."

Isa. 40:15 – "Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very small thing. ... All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity."

In Jn. 2:11 after turning water into wine, it says "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him." All the miracles Jesus did were not just a magical sideshow, but were for the purpose of revealing God's glory and power, and for those who could see, revealing him as their Messiah-God.

- He is the King of glory

Ps. 24:7-10 – "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory."

Ps. 29:3 – "The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters."