

## **The Glory of His Name**

God's name involves the revelation of his character. Unsurprisingly, both his character and his name link inextricably to his glory. How precisely this works should warrant careful study. Of course, both religious and secular circles use the term *glory* with regularity, yet only rarely do we understand its full significance. To this issue we now turn. I will be working through an abundance of verses from various sources in this section because I wish to show that this is one of the chief concerns of the whole of God's revelation.

### **The Name and the Glory**

This discussion is more than tangential to a larger discussion of prayer for the sake of his name. Indeed, the writers of Scripture frequently employ *name* and *glory* as synonyms. In Psalm 102:15, for example, the afflicted man prays,

The nations will fear the name of the LORD,

All the kings of the earth will revere your glory.

In a typical Hebrew poetic construction, the psalmist sets "the name of the LORD" in parallel with "your glory," as he does "fear" and "revere." The two are equivalent phrases, it seems. Isaiah uses an almost identical parallelism:

From the west, men will fear the name of the LORD,

and from the rising of the sun, they will revere his glory. (59:19)

From east and west, across the whole earth, humanity will honor God. Name and glory often have the same significance in God's Word.

Perhaps this is nowhere clearer than in the episode we examined in the last chapter. After interceding in behalf of his people, Moses requests, "Now show me your glory" (Exodus 33:18). How

Permissions: You are permitted to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way, do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, and do not make more than 1000 physical copies. For web posting, a link to this document on our website is preferred. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By Brandon Cooper. ©Follow After Ministries. Website: [www.followafter.net](http://www.followafter.net). E-mail: [brandon@followafter.net](mailto:brandon@followafter.net).

does God reply? “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will *proclaim my name*, the LORD, in your presence” (verse 19). Moses asks to see God’s glory, and God responds by proclaiming his name! Note too that the proclamation of his name, the demonstration of his glory, also involves the revelation of his goodness. This is confirmed by the name God declares in 34:6-7: “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.” This is not incidental, as we will see presently. But first, we need to examine more thoroughly the significance of that ubiquitous term *glory*.

## God’s Glory

In seeking to comprehend the full import of glory, we would do well to explore three distinct but related meanings.<sup>1</sup>

### *Heavy Stuff*

First, glory signifies internal worth: being filled with goodness, excellence, or beauty. This makes sense, as the Hebrew term for glorious, *kavôd*, derives from a similar term meaning “heavy.” Thus, those people or objects that are most glorious are those that are filled with the most excellence, and consequently are the “heaviest.” Conversely, those that lack worth are described as being “light.”

Consider Daniel’s encounter with the Babylonian king Belshazzar, recorded in Daniel 5:1-30. Belshazzar hosts a saturnalian feast for his nobles, during which time he, his wives and his concubines profane the goblets taken from the temple in Jerusalem. At once a human hand appears and etches that famous writing on the wall: “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN” (verse 25). As Daniel correctly observes, this happens because Belshazzar “did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways”

---

<sup>1</sup> I am greatly indebted in this section to the work of Jonathan Edwards, *The End for Which God Created the World*, chapter 2, section 6. The entire text is available in John Piper, *God’s Passion for His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), along with a useful introduction.

Permissions: You are permitted to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way, do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, and do not make more than 1000 physical copies. For web posting, a link to this document on our website is preferred. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By Brandon Cooper. ©Follow After Ministries. Website: [www.followafter.net](http://www.followafter.net). E-mail: [brandon@followafter.net](mailto:brandon@followafter.net).



(verse 23). The first and third words declare, respectively, that Belshazzar’s days have been numbered and that his kingdom will be given to the Persians. It is the second term, *tekel*, that concerns us here, which in Aramaic means “weighed.” Daniel interprets the full significance of the term for Belshazzar, “You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting” (verse 27). God weighs Belshazzar to see if he is “heavy,” that is, glorious, worthy, filled with goodness. When he finds Belshazzar “light” instead, he tears the kingdom away from him and gives it to Darius the Mede.

While Belshazzar was weighed and found wanting, those who prove “heavy”—that is, filled with internal worth of some sort—are described as *glorious*. For example, in Psalm 45, a royal wedding song, we read:

All glorious is the princess within her chamber;  
her gown is interwoven with gold. (Verse 13)

Owing to her great beauty, and the excellence of her attire, the princess manifests the great weight of glory. The prophet Haggai describes the temple of Solomon similarly: “Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it now seem to you like nothing?” (2:3). Whereas Solomon’s temple had sufficient beauty and worth to be considered glorious, Zerubbabel’s rebuilding attempts seem empty by comparison.

Of course, all the glory of the world could not equal the incomparable worth of God himself. No wonder Isaiah writes,

All men are like grass,  
and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.

.....

The grass withers and the flowers fall,  
but the word of our God stands forever. (40:6, 8)



Our glory fades; the Lord's does not. His internal worth overwhelms, filled as he is with every perfection and excellence. The "heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1a) because of the majesty of his creativity. David proclaims that he will glorify God, because his "love is better than life" (Psalm 63:3). The psalmist invites all the earth to sing the glory of his name, to make God's praise glorious, because—as he says to God—"How awesome are your deeds! / So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you" (Psalm 66:2-3). John says we have seen "the glory of the One and Only," the Word become flesh, because he is "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Paul describes the second coming of Christ as his "glorious appearing" because this is the appearing of the Savior "who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own" (Titus 2:13-14). When God is weighed, he proves his glory. Of his infinite worth and majestic excellence there is no end.

### *Like Shook Foil*

As *glory* first of all signifies internal worth, so it secondly denotes the emanation or communication of that worth. What is glorious does not remain inward and hidden, but radiates its glory to the surrounding world as light bursts forth from a luminary. Thus, when Paul speaks of the heavenly bodies, he speaks of their *glory*: "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory" (1 Corinthians 15:41, ESV). While the sun, moon and stars have impressive worth—their burning heat, the order they bring to night and day—what matters for us is here is that they communicate that worth by shining (or reflecting) light upon us.

So it is with God. As the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins observed, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God. / It will flame out, like shining from shook foil." God's glory radiates from his creation like sunlight reflecting on aluminum foil. And his glory radiates from his being like light from the sun. Thus, when Isaiah has his vision of God on his throne in heaven, the cherubim and seraphim surrounding him cry out, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD God Almighty; the whole earth is filled with his glory" (6:3).

Permissions: You are permitted to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way, do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, and do not make more than 1000 physical copies. For web posting, a link to this document on our website is preferred. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By Brandon Cooper. ©Follow After Ministries. Website: [www.followafter.net](http://www.followafter.net). E-mail: [brandon@followafter.net](mailto:brandon@followafter.net).



God's glory fills the earth because it shines forth from him and covers the land. Such infinite worth cannot be contained!

This explains why in the new heavens and new earth there will be no need of a sun, moon, or stars. God's glory will illuminate the world, just as the glory of the angel of the Lord shone upon the shepherds outside of Bethlehem (Luke 2:9). Thus, in Revelation 21:23 we read, "The city [New Jerusalem] does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp." Isaiah had predicted as much centuries before, when he wrote,

The sun will no more be your light by day,  
nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you,  
for the LORD will be your everlasting light,  
and your God will be your glory. (60:19)

Ezekiel poetically pictures the glory of the Lord as a rainbow bursting through the clouds: "Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (1:28). So bright is God's glory that the prophet will later speak of it as illuminating the temple court (10:4).

Nor is God the Father the only member of the Trinity whose glory brightens what surrounds him. Whereas few humans have beheld the Father's glory, those who walked with the incarnate Christ two millennia ago saw his. Thus, the beloved disciple asserts, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Christ's worth is undeniable—full of grace and truth—and some have seen it clothed in human flesh. Interestingly, the writer of Hebrews pictures the incarnation as another instance of God shining forth his glory on humanity: "The Son is the *radiance of God's glory* and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word" (1:4). The Son shines



forth the Father's glory, so we have seen "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Likewise God the Holy Spirit. Comparing the ministry of Moses (law) with that of the Spirit (grace), Paul writes, "Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?" (2 Corinthians 3:7-8). You may recall that Moses' face radiated light after he descended from Mount Sinai, such that he would wear a veil when not in the Lord's presence (Exodus 34:29-35). If his ministry, which was but a shadow of the grace to come, radiated, emitted such powerful light as to require a veil, how much more so the ministry of the Spirit? Incomparably more, to be sure.

Of course, the glory on display, radiating from the triune Godhead, is but the glory of his character. To return once more to a passage we have visited often, when Moses asks to see God's glory, what does God communicate to him? The "light" that emanates from God's back is the character he proclaims while passing by Moses: grace, compassion, love, faithfulness, patience, forgiveness, judgment (Exodus 33:18-19; 34:6-7). Turning to the New Testament, Paul pictures God as delaying the judgment of the wicked in order to "make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory" (Romans 9:23). Again, the glory he reveals to us, his chosen people, is his patience, mercy, and righteous judgment. When Paul prays that the Ephesians would know the "riches of his glory," he follows by asking that they would have "strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge" (Ephesians 3:16-19, ESV). God's incomparably excellent character is this wealth of glory.

Henry van Dyke's famous chorus sums it up well:

"All Thy works with joy surround Thee, earth and heaven reflect Thy rays,

Permissions: You are permitted to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way, do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, and do not make more than 1000 physical copies. For web posting, a link to this document on our website is preferred. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By Brandon Cooper. ©Follow After Ministries. Website: [www.followafter.net](http://www.followafter.net). E-mail: [brandon@followafter.net](mailto:brandon@followafter.net).



stars and angels sing around Thee, center of unbroken praise.”<sup>2</sup>

### *Glorying in His Glory*

God’s glory refers to his inward perfection and its outward manifestation. But there is another element to the definition: that of our response. As God’s glory radiates outward from him, his creatures apprehend it and accord him the praise he deserves. Thus, thirdly, *glory* connotes the honor or praise given to someone or something glorious. When we speak of the glory of his name, we are declaring his fame, his worth in our sight, the adoration he merits. We glory in his glory.

God intends his creatures to witness his perfection. The whole earth will be filled with his glory, as in Habakkuk 2:14: “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” Similarly, the Lord declares through his prophet Ezekiel, “I will display my glory among the nations” (39:21a). All will see the outward manifestation of his great worth.

So how should we respond?

Once we behold the glory of the Lord, we should offer him the honor he deserves, and thus will our glory turn to praise. Indeed, *glory* and *praise* are often used synonymously in Scripture. So the Lord declares, “I will not give my *glory* to another or my *praise* to idols” (Isaiah 42:8). In response, Isaiah commands, “Let them give *glory* to the LORD and proclaim his *praise* in the islands” (verse 12).

Occasionally, the writers of the Scripture will set *name*, *praise*, and *glory* in parallel, proving the close connection between all three. The Lord bound the house of Israel to himself, for example, that “they might be for me a people, a *name*, a *praise*, and a *glory*” (Jeremiah 13:11, ESV). Elsewhere the Lord declares, “For my own *name’s* sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my *praise* I hold it back from you, so as not to cut you off. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I

---

<sup>2</sup> From “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee,” set to the “Ode to Joy” melody from the final movement of Ludwig van Beethoven’s Symphony no. 9 in D minor, Op. 125.

Permissions: You are permitted to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way, do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, and do not make more than 1000 physical copies. For web posting, a link to this document on our website is preferred. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By Brandon Cooper. ©Follow After Ministries. Website: [www.followafter.net](http://www.followafter.net). E-mail: [brandon@followafter.net](mailto:brandon@followafter.net).



will not yield my *glory* to another” (Isaiah 48:9, 11). God’s name captures the whole wonder of his glorious character, and once visible, his creatures respond in praise.

It is our rejoicing in the splendor of God’s being that should characterize our praise. For this reason, the scriptures enjoin our singing—as an expression of the joy we experience upon seeing his glory. Consider the first five verses of Psalm 33:

Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous;

it is fitting for the upright to praise him.

Praise the LORD with the harp;

make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.

Sing to him a new song;

play skillfully, and shout for joy.

For the word of the LORD is right and true;

he is faithful in all he does.

The LORD loves righteousness and justice;

the earth is full of his unfailing love.

Here we see the three stages of God’s glory in quick succession. His internal worth is evident: his word is “right and true,” he is “faithful in all he does,” loving “righteousness and justice.” He communicates his righteous character to his creatures, such that “the earth is full of his unfailing love.” And thus we glorify him—making music and singing a new song to him, praising the Lord and shouting for joy. “Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen” (Psalm 72:19).