

THE GLORIOUS GOD, EXODUS 33:12-23; 34:39-35

What is God Really Like? #6

◆**Intro:** Back in the day the Chicago Bulls were, as they say, “in their glory.” Can you guess *when* I’m talking about? I’m talking about the days when #23 put on the jersey and ran the courts, and flew the lane. If you know anything about Basketball in America you know his name: Michael Jordan. aka, Air Jordan. Jordan’s glory was on the basketball court. We would say that that was where he would “shine”. Maybe you remember after he retired that he tried his hand at another professional sport? Anyone remember? Oh, that’s right, baseball. But there just wasn’t “glory” there. Rather, his shine did a slow fade. One major league scout summed him up on the baseball field like this: “Average speed. Very hard worker. No chance.” Jordan just didn’t carry weight in baseball. But in basketball he was in his glory.

◆You may have noticed some of the ways we talk about glory that help us understand what it is. We speak in terms of light, and “shining”. We speak in terms of “weight” and importance. The Old Testament Hebrew word for glory is *kabod*. It literally means weight. The New Testament Greek term is *doxa*, as in doxology; a word (logos) of glory (doxa). Doxa translates brightness, or glory, or approval, majesty. So let’s start with the definition of what we mean when we say God is the Glorious God.

◆1. God’s glory means that he outshines everything else. In a way, we might say that all his attributes are summed up by the concept of his glory. They all show his consummate greatness. They show that God has weight, and ought by necessity carry weight with everyone and everything. Often when the Scriptures speak of God’s glory they do so in terms of a light that is more than we can take. Have you ever had someone shine a really bright

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light in your eyes? Probably you had to turn away. God is light. He is the brightest of light.

◆A. In our text Moses asks to see God's glory. He already knows God. He already has the immense privilege of speaking with God face to face, which I take to mean, very intimately and close, since in our text we are assured Moses can not really see God's face and live. He isn't granted the full request because God by definition is too much for him. So we might say that God's glory refers to his "too-muchness" or his being more than we can understand or grasp. To see God would be like asking to stand on the surface of the sun. You'd be burnt to a crisp while still a million miles away from it just by drawing near, much more so standing on it. The Earth is 93 million miles away, and if we stay out in the sun unprotected too long, we get burnt here! If God had shown Moses all that he was, Moses' heart would have exploded or disintegrated. Verse 20 says no man can look on God and survive! And, after seeing just a glimpse of God, Moses face shines with light.

◆When the prophet Ezekiel has a vision of God he noted... "I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. 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. When I saw it, I fell face down..." Ezekiel 1:27, 28, NIV.

◆In the NT when the angels announced Jesus' birth to the shepherds we are told that "glory shone around them, and they were afraid!"

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◆ Paul speaks of God like this: "...God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no-one has seen or can see. To him be honour and might for ever. Amen." 1 Timothy 6:15, 16, NIV.

◆ So then, that God is glorious tells us that he is far and away beyond and more brilliant and pure than we can comprehend. (That's also why the Bible sometimes refers to heaven itself as "glory". It is a realm far more than we can comprehend. It is another display of God's "too-muchness".) So, there will be no patting of backs and hi-fives among us as though we are somehow, pretty darn as good as God!

◆ *"Therefore no-one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," Romans 3:20-23, NIV.*

◆ You see? None of us can jump that high.

◆ We shall have to take it on faith there there is much more to God, as well as heaven's realm, than we know. Too much more, really. We are like a schoolboy, (according to Lewis in *Weight of Glory*) who, beginning his lessons in grammar, can not really look forward to reading fine poetry and enjoying it, or

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writing a sonnet, or a moving essay. He instead labors to get a good grade, or just not to be punished, or to please his parents. But he is also working toward a future good which he cannot at present even imagine or desire. The Christian life is much the same as this. There is glory, God's glory, to be seen and enjoyed. And there is a kind of life in him, if we should decide to obey his exercises, that far exceeds anything we can conceive now. Still, we will not find it without following him into what we cannot currently comprehend.

◆ The Bible is constantly inviting us to notice God's glory.

Ps.19 says the heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim his artistry.

◆ B. Now here's another interesting thing about God's glory. While it is in totality far too much for puny people made of dust to bear, God's glory is what he seeks to shine on man. The Jews called it the "Shekinah" glory. The word means "dwelling." The mysterious thing about the one true God is that this glorious Being chooses to dwell with humanity, his prized creation. It's what the Jews called the cloud of God's presence in the wilderness. It was the Shekinah Glory, the Dwelling Glory of God that settled on the Tabernacle. Same thing happened when Solomon finished building the Temple in Jerusalem.

◆ "When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple." 1 Kings 8:10, 11, NIV.

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◆ When Jesus was born John explained it in terms of the OT Tabernacle and the dwelling of God's glory with us!

◆ *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling (literally "tabernacled/tented") 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, NIV.*

◆ It seems that most people who outshine those around them tend to retreat from the masses rather than associate with them. Presidents are bumpered by Secret Service men. Rock stars hole up in mansions, and compounds secluded from the world. Movie stars ride in darkened limos and wear sunglasses even at night. God is just the opposite. The one who the heavens cannot contain, stepped onto the earth in the form of a man to let us in on his glory! His glory is condescending. He displays it to lower life forms. What we see with Moses, and also Israel is that God desires an intimacy with us. The majestic Being is willing to show at least as much of the mansion, and his talent as one could stand without dying from the rush.

◆ *"In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering." Hebrews 2:10, NIV.*

◆ I think we need to stop and be impressed with this. Why should God tell us anything? Why should he allow us to know what he is like, that he is omniscient, or all-powerful, or even good? Why shouldn't God let us trudge through life knowing nothing of our

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purpose or eternity, or hope –but merely running our course like this years crop of grasshoppers, never to be remembered by those yet unborn? But he doesn't. God wants you to see his glory. To delight in his power, his love, his light. He invites you to come to him and discover more of which you have no idea yet.

◆**2. The proper response to God's glory is to acknowledge it and delight in it.** The Westminster Confession says that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Not that we donate a helping of glory to God that he doesn't already have, but that we name it, point to it, and delight in it as a fan delights in her idol's music, or a groupie relishes the presence and performances of his hero. This is what sets a follower of God apart from a demon. Demons acknowledge God's glory. But they don't delight in him. Their hearts aren't attached.

◆*“Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. Worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth. Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns.” The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.” Psalms 96:7-10, NIV.*

◆**A. God invites me into his glory.** That is, the Glorious God invites you to be his!! This is perhaps the most obvious conclusion we come to in looking at the glory attribute of God. It is his “greater than all” attribute. His, as I've called it, “too-muchness”. It is his heaven, his

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eternality. And this is what he opens to men and women. Paul says this in commenting on our text.

◆“We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away...But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away...*And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*”
2 Corinthians 3:13,16,18, NIV.

◆Because of Christ, we have seen God. And it’s not a fading thing, it’s an increasing thing! In Christ we are promised to glow more and more! We are promised transformation, the doing away with sin and the coming to life of the new. This is the message: come to Christ. There is more, so much more. CS Lewis puts it...

◆“we are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex, and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

◆Decide right now to stop being too easily pleased! Choose the more. Invite Christ further in.

◆B. I can start to experience more of God by giving him glory due him. How are you giving glory to God with your life? You and I were created to do this! Does your life cause any to notice that there is a God who is the source of good? In the spirit realm, good done without

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connection to God, has no power. True good only comes when we do it for God, because we love God.

◆“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31, NIV.

◆Here are some very tangible ways to give God glory.

◆God is gloried when we do good things that point to him.

◆John 15:8 *This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

◆God is glorified by saving sex for marriage.

◆1Cor. 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. ... Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit,...you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

◆God is gloried when we confess sin.

◆Josh. 7:19 Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give him the praise. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me."

◆God is glorified when we live by trusting God in what we can't figure out.

◆Rom. 4:19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead --since he was about a hundred years old --and that Sarah's womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in

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his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

◆ *God is glorified when we name Jesus as Lord!*

◆ Phil. 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, ...11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

◆ *God is glorified when we get along with each other.*

◆ Rom. 15:5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

◆ One might ask how you can give glory to God while working in the shop or sitting at a desk. But we must not think that God is absent in the machine shop, or the farm yard, while present in the chapel or church. Glorifying God depends not on changing jobs but in doing for God's sake what we have been used to doing for our own. In 1625 Jane De Chantal wrote to her brother, an archbishop with advice I think we can still take to heart. She wrote, "during the activities of day, spiritual as well as temporal, as often as you can, unite your will to God's by a simple, loving glance at God, or by a few words spoken quietly and cast into his heart, by assenting in words like: "Yes Lord, I want to do this action because you want it", or simply "Yes Father", or other words that the Holy Spirit will suggest to you.

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This will show that above everything you want to do the holy will of God and seek nothing but his glory in all that you do.”

◆**Conclusion:** You know what makes the moon shine? It reflects the sun. As long as nothing is blocking its view of the sun, it shines. And so it is in the spiritual realm. You want to glow in glory like the God of Glory? Get near him daily, weekly. Get exposed to his light. Talk out-loud with him. Read his word. Worship him. And his glory will change the way you look.