

BEHOLDING HIS GLORY John 17:24

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; **that they may behold my glory**, which thou hast given me: for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world."

Throughout the Scriptures we find various times in which the glory of God is spoken of, and the men who were privileged to see some part or portion of His glory. Of these men we have Moses asking for God to "shew me thy glory." We have Isaiah saying, "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up." The apostle John wrote, "we beheld his glory." Paul speaks of seeing "the glory of that light." We will further examine these references and try to glean some truth from them for our edification.

The prayer of Christ was for the blessedness of His people in beholding His glory. Once redeemed, the believer will not be satisfied until he can come to Christ and behold His glory. One of the greatest privileges of believers both here and in glory consists in beholding the glory of Christ. Thus Christ prays in this solemn intercession as if it is the final compliment of all His other requests in their behalf.

First, a word concerning unbelievers. All unbelievers in their heart call Christ "Ichabod" (1 Samuel 4:21), i.e. Where is the glory? They see neither "form nor comeliness" in Christ that He should be desired. Many will profess and say, "Hail, Master," then crucify Him (Matthew 26:49). Never was there an age since the name of Christian was known that there is such direct opposition to the person and glory of Christ as now, but God in His appointed time will effectually vindicate His honor and glory from the vain attempts of men of corrupt minds against Him. It is the duty of all who "love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" (Ephesians 6:24), to stand against this, and give testimony to the Divine Person and glory of the Son of God.

A. Definition of the words "behold," and "glory."

Behold is defined as "to look closely at," "to perceive," or "to gaze intently." The idea is that one fixes their eyes on an object with the intent of observing both by sight, and comprehending intellectually, all there is about that object (John 1:29,36; 19:14).

Glory has various meanings. It may mean "something revealed," "brightness," "splendor," "honour," "dignity," "render apparent," or "the honour resulting from a good opinion." In reference to God it includes the nature and acts of God in self-manifestation, i.e. what He essentially is, and does. This was exhibited in the character and acts of Christ in the days of His flesh. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). Both His grace and power were manifest at Cana, and these constituted His glory. So in the resurrection of Lazarus, and in His own resurrection (Romans 6:4). His everlasting power and Divinity are spoken of as His glory, i.e. His attributes and power as revealed through creation (Romans 1:20-23).

The manifested perfection of God's character in righteousness is His glory, and of which men come short (Romans 3:23). God is described as the Source from whom all Divine splendor and perfection proceed in their manifestation, and to whom they belong (Ephesians 1:17). In the O.T. the Shekinah glory descended emanating from God and filling the Tabernacle displaying His ineffable light and holiness.

There are two ways to behold His glory, by faith, and by sight. In this present time we must behold it by faith through His written Word. When faith gives way to sight we shall with our eyes behold Him in His glory.

B. Moses request (Exodus 33:19).

"And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." Moses had asked for God to show him God's way if he had found grace in His sight (33:13), and now asks to see His glory. Grace always precedes glory. We cannot see God's glory until He has first been gracious to us.

Moses request is to be noted for its peculiarity. He had seen the burning bush and heard God's voice out of it, and he had been witness of the glorious wonders of God's power in delivering the Israelites from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the destruction of the Egyptians in the closing waters, and heard the voice of God speaking to him from the pillar of fire and the cloud. But Moses was not satisfied with that, but prays that God would shew him His glory, some representation of the Divine glory, something of His glorious majesty, something of the brightness of His countenance, some manifestation of His excellency. Moses knew that the ultimate rest, blessedness, and satisfaction of the soul was not in seeing the works of God, but the glory of God Himself.

This was also David's longing and prayer when he could only behold God's glory in types and shadows. "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary" (Psalm 63:1,2). "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple" (Psalm 27:4).

There was in the sanctuary an obscure representation of the glory of God in Christ. How much more should we prize that view of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). "But 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" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

No man could see the face of God and live (apart from the Mediator, as God in Christ is fully manifested). Sinful man, even in grace, is such that if God were to display all His glory to him, it would astonish, overcome, and destroy him (1 Timothy 6:16). God answers Moses request by putting him into the cleft of the rock, i.e. Christ. (And that Rock was Christ, 1 Corinthians 10:4). None can see God's glory except those who are in Christ and take shelter in Him. God shows His glory so Moses may gaze upon it, but only as that glory passed by before him in a sudden and very transitory vision. It was the "back parts" which Moses saw, i.e. the obscure and imperfect delineation of His glory, as much as he could bear, but not as much as he desired. If we desire to see His glory, He will give us more. ". . . for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, . . ." (Luke 8:18).

God had made Himself known to Moses in the glory of His self-existence and self-sufficiency when He proclaimed "I AM THAT I AM." Now God made Himself known to Moses in the glory of His grace, goodness, and all-sufficiency as He passed by. "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; . . ." (Exodus 34:6,7). JEHOVAH, JEHOVAH God, i.e. His glorious being, power, and authority. First, the God of mercy is specified for it opens the way to all the other gifts of grace, longsuffering, goodness, and truth. They had sung unto the LORD after their deliverance from Egypt, "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Exodus 15:11).

C. Isaiah saw His glory (Isaiah 6:1-5).

Isaiah's vision of God's glory is referenced by the Lord. "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him" (John 12:41). Isaiah was privileged to

see the Lord (Adonai, the name of God as supreme Lord of all, see Romans 9:5) with all the accompaniment of majestic splendor, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, that God was thrice holy, the whole earth was filled with His glory, and that he was the King, the LORD of hosts. The King on a throne in the posture of a judge, and His train, i.e. the hem of His royal and judicial robes, filled the temple which signifies more than ordinary majesty. The repetition of the holiness of God reveals the Divine essence of the Trinity. All the mind in heaven is one, and the seraphims are not occupied with their beauty, but only that of God. ". . . and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory (Psalm 29:9). God is manifested in a clear revelation of holiness, but in view of John 12, we must remember that it is Christ's glory (a theophanies) on which Isaiah looks, and this threefold ascription only says, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

The whole earth is set in contrast to the land of Canaan to which the Jews confined the presence of God, but may also include a reference to the Gentiles conversion for this passage contains the judgement of the Jewish nation as spoken in the N.T. (Matthew 13; John 12; Acts 28). The King, the LORD of hosts, is a vision of assurance during the coming Assyrian captivity and the judgment he was to pronounce on the nation. The actual fulfillment of the whole earth being filled with His glory will occur when the King of glory comes in His glory and reigns.

D. We beheld His glory (John 1:14).

The Word was made flesh. The Incarnation was a more clear revelation than anything ever before. This was the human nature of Christ in which His glory was veiled (Hebrews 2:14,16). Christ dwelt in a tabernacle of flesh signifying very lowly circumstances, i.e. as in a tent, but not as a home. The God of the O.T. dwelt in the tabernacle of Moses, but now He dwelt in the human flesh of Christ. John writing, and including the other disciples, beheld Christ's glory. They saw through the veil His Divine Being, while others only saw the veil of His humanity. This is still true today (2 Corinthians 4:3-6), for the majority of mankind see no beauty in Him that they should desire Him.

Peter states they were "eyewitnesses of His Majesty," which they saw on the Mt. of Transfiguration, but still did not see all the glory of the Son of God clothed in human flesh. The sun is the fountain of light, though it may be eclipsed or clouded, so Christ in His flesh was still the brightness of His Father's glory. They beheld His glory as the only begotten of the Father. The Word made flesh was such a glory as became the only begotten Son of God, and could not be the glory of any other. Christ was the image of all the excellencies and perfections of God.

When was it that they beheld His glory? His Divine glory was manifested at His transfiguration, in His purity, His miracles, His goodness, His grace, His compassions, His life, His passion, His resurrection, His ascension, His doctrine, His truth, and in His confession of "I AM." In the O.T. tabernacle wherein God dwelt was the law, but in Christ it was grace. He was full of grace and truth, the two great things man needs. Full of grace to intercede for us, and full of truth to instruct us.

E. That they may behold my glory (John 17:24).

The disciples had beheld Christ's glory veiled in the flesh, but the Lord would have them for all eternity behold His glory without any veil. This glory is the glory for which Christ prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5). The glory Christ had with the Father before His incarnation they had not beheld, i.e. His essential glory. The glory of the Son of Man is the glory which He received from the Father (John 17:22). This

glory as the God-Man, the Mediator, the Son of God incarnate, is a personal glory although received, is and ever must be, peculiar to Himself and incommunicable, i.e. the glory as the only begotten Son of God the firstborn of every creature.

Even with the darkness of Calvary before Him, Christ thinks only of His beloved people. His language clearly conveys that He would not be satisfied with the glory itself unless those brought into union with Him be there to behold His glory. It is His will that His redeemed be with Him to behold His glory. This is truly heaven, to be with Him, to be where He is, and to behold His glory. Would we be happy there? Eternity will be spent in ascribing blessing, honour, power, and praise to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. We will magnify His holy name, and with unspeakable adoration worship Him.

We must begin now for it is preparation for that time. How sweet it is to see by faith the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. To see the glory of His grace and love as revealed in His Word, and to find in Him "all in all." To find in Him all we want, all we need, or ever will need. Yet what shall it be like to behold His unveiled face in the glory no longer through a glass darkly, i.e. without the presence of sin to obscure it, but with Him, beholding His glory and that enjoyment throughout all eternity. We shall behold His beauty, His holiness, His grace, His love which now passeth our human knowledge. We shall see the salvation of God and know the depths from which it has plucked us, and the heights to which it has exalted us. We shall behold His glory without a sin tainted eye. OH! that glory which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man to conceive.

"Father, I will." This will is registered in the heart of God. It has been endorsed in the resurrection of Christ. It has been attested and sealed by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, and is recorded for the encouragement of our faith in God's Word. May we strengthen our faith by dwelling on these words, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am: that they may behold my glory, . . ."

F. Paul's revelation of His glory (Acts 9:3; 22:6,14; 26:13).

Paul was called as "one born out of due time" (1 Corinthians 15:8). Paul's witness of the resurrected Christ was not on this earth as the twelve had seen Him. Paul was called out by the risen Christ in His glory. His revelation of the glory of Christ takes us into realms which the twelve did not know. Without much explanation the titles which Paul uses for Christ reveal the glory of His vision and revelation.

Some of them are: The Lord Jesus Christ, i.e. His resurrection title; the Wisdom of God; the Power of God; the Peace of God; the Grace of God; the Lord of glory; the Lord from heaven; the Firstborn of every creature; the Image of the invisible God; the Creator of all things; the Firstborn from the dead; the Head of the body, the church; highly exalted and Jesus Christ is Lord; the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God; the Mediator; God our Saviour; our Saviour Jesus Christ; the Lord, the righteous Judge; the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; the Brightness of His glory; the Express Image of His person; the Apostle and High Priest; the Author and Finisher of our faith; the blessed and only Potentate; the King of kings, and Lord of Lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto. **THAT IN ALL THINGS HE MAY HAVE THE PREMEINENCE.**

By faith we can behold His glory through the titles revealed to us and get a glimpse of that glory we shall behold by sight for all eternity. May we seek to behold His glory that He may grant us more and more of it.