

The Glory of the Lord

By Michael Clark

Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, And deep darkness the peoples; But the LORD will rise upon you, And His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isaiah 60:1-3, NASB).

The morning of New Years Eve, 12/31/01, I heard the following words as I awoke:

"You shall no longer say, 'the glory of the Lord, the glory of the Lord,' for my glory will not be something that is external as if you could bring it down. My glory is in your midst."

As I pondered these words I found this phrase, "the glory of the Lord," only twice in the King James New Testament. These two instances are as follows:

And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. (Luke 2:9, NKJV).

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.(2 Corinthians 3:18, NKJV).

In the first instance the angel of the Lord had appeared to the shepherds in their fields and "the glory of the Lord shone around them," causing them great fear. In the second instance Paul is addressing the Church in Corinth and seems to be telling them that the glory of the Lord is upon them. It is something that can be seen when they look in the mirror and behold themselves being transformed into His image by the Spirit from glory to glory. The first instance speaks of the old covenant in which the glory of the Lord came down into a place, outside of men. The second speaks of a new and perfect covenant in which the glory of the Lord inhabits not a place, but a people.

In the former covenant there was one man, Moses, whose face shown with the glory of the Lord, but it faded away. In the new it is a lasting glory that has been made available to us and honors all who belong to Jesus our Messiah.

A Glory that Faded

In the old covenant, when the glory of the Lord came down, all business stopped. Not even Moses could enter the tabernacle of meeting when the glory cloud rested upon it. The people could not move the camp onward while the cloud rested above the tabernacle.

Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up.(Exodus 40:34-37, NKJV).

When Solomon built his temple for the Lord as a place to offer sacrifice and the glory cloud came down, the priests were so overwhelmed with its presence that they could not do their priestly duties.

And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. (1 Kings 8:10,11, NKJV).

During the old covenant the glory cloud and the presence of the Lord did not abide in the same space that was occupied by men, sanctified priest or not, but it inhabited places. Now what is Paul telling us in his letter to the Corinthians? Had things changed?

(God) who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it. For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory. (2 Corinthians 3:6-11, NASB).

Jesus did not come just to take away our sins. That in itself would seem enough, but God had a greater overall plan in mind. He wanted to make Jesus the first of many sons unto His glory and Jesus knew that THAT was the real mission.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:29, NKJV).

Where are You?

If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. (John 12:26, NASB).

When Adam and Eve fell by eating the forbidden fruit, they ran and hid and God came to them saying, "Adam, where are you?" Have you ever wondered how the all-seeing God would not know where Adam was? When I was a child, I would hide from my mom, playing a game. She would come looking for me saying, "Michael, where are you?" knowing full well I was hiding behind the couch, as usual. No, God knew exactly where Adam was, but wanted Adam to know exactly what he had become, where he was spiritually and which one of them he had become like in his rebellion (Gen. 3:22). It was all down hill from there for his descendants.

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. (Romans 1:22,23, NASB).

What an exchange it was! Adam once walked in the glory of God, but those after him could only carve images to take the place of what was lost.

That Where I Am, You May Be Also

Jesus came to reverse the effect of the curse and restore the glory among men.

Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:24, NASB).

Jesus was praying this prayer in the presence of His disciples, but they were not "where He was." It is Jesus' desire that all who follow Him would be there where He IS,

not so much in a physical since, "pie in the sky by and by" but in the same place spiritually. Note how he petitioned the Father for us all. The only way you can behold His glory is to be with Him where He IS, one in His Spirit with Him. He also prayed in that hour:

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one. (John 17:20-22, NKJV).

He did not pray for these disciples alone, for all of us who truly believe in Him, cling to, trust in and rely upon Him as our only salvation and Lord are included in this prayer. "That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us. . . And the glory which You gave Me I have given them."

It was and still is the desire of Jesus that we would be one with Him and the Father and with one another. That where HE IS there we would be also. It is here in this state where His glory shines forth. This is what set the early Church apart from the world. This unity in Christ and glory was what "turned the world upside down."

They Saw the Glory upon Stephen's Face

When Stephen was about to be condemned to death by men who had refused this glory, but rather chosen to cover themselves with the fig leaves of religion and self-righteousness, a marvelous thing happened. He was transfigured before his persecutors' eyes.

And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel. (Acts 6:15, NKJV).

Imagine the blind rage that would let men stone to death a saint that shown with the glory of God. He shown with the abiding presence of God's glory in his own temple while he warned these men that God no longer dwelt in houses made by the hands of men. Paul who witnessed this execution of Stephen and did not get away untouched later wrote:

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves. (2 Corinthians 4:3-7, NASB).

Just as Jesus told Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father," so it is that as His light shines forth into our hearts with the knowledge of His glory, the face of Christ is manifest upon His vessels of clay.

A Glory Not Found In the Temples Made by Men

This glory does not reside in mere buildings made by men. It is found in only one temple, a temple made with living stones. Peter spoke of this new temple when he said,

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:4-9, NKJV).

Paul wrote elsewhere:

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:19,20, NKJV).

And to the Ephesians he wrote:

. . .having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:20-22, NKJV).

It is in the whole body of Christ joined together that the glory of the Lord is manifest.

Have you ever heard ministers pray that the glory cloud would come down and fill their church buildings or conference centers? How it must grieve the Lord that those who would represent Him miss the point of what God is doing in this day of grace. It is not about buildings made with the hands of men (see Acts 7:48-51). This is old covenant thinking. Again, the writer of Hebrews speaks of this contrast of the two covenants:

And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end. (Hebrews 3:5,6, NKJV).

. . .and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:5,6, NKJV).

There is a transformation that is taking place in us as we behold Him. His glory is found in a collective manifestation in the whole body of Christ, His true ecclesia the Church. Consider Jesus' words to the Pharisees:

Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20,21, NKJV).

The glory is not to be found in a holy mountain or in Jerusalem (the temple). His glory is found in those who abide in Him "in Spirit and in Truth." (see John 4:21-24). This is where true worship takes place, in His temple made of living stones among those of the new priesthood of all believers.

From Glory to Glory

The glory which we so often seek externally is within us. It shows on the faces of those who behold Jesus as if they were a mirror placed at an angle so viewer can see Jesus the same way a rear view mirror on a car works. THIS is the witness of Jesus! THIS is what will draw all men unto Him, not some circus sideshow in His name. Look at the context of our verse from second Corinthians with which we started:

Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:16-18, NKJV).

In order to behold the beauty of a great painting you must at some point stand back and look at it in its fullness. When the original masterpiece of the last supper was done, Leonardo da Vinci painted it as a mural and it filled the end wall of a room. It was so life-like, when you walked into the other end of the room, you thought you were there in the upper room with Jesus and the disciples! Later some monks in the monastery cut two doorways through the wall with careless disregard and ruined the perspective and effect of this outstanding work. This has also been the effect of religious men through the last 2000 years as they have altered what Jesus painted in the first century through the Holy Spirit. The original has been modified and most of the effect has been lost.

As Jesus' temple, we must get our spiritual eyes back, eyes that behold Him as He. We must see the great value of every saint in the overall picture. We must once again place on each member of His body his or her full God-given value. As we do, the damage will be repaired to the mirror that was meant to reflect His glory. Then the lost will gain back the proper perspective of the kingdom of God and will see Him as He is.

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (1 John 3:2,3, NKJV).

Be encouraged, dear saints of God.

