

**More Than Meets
The Eye:
God's Glory Reflected
in His Creation**

Chronicles of the Glory of God, Volume 1

More Than Meets the Eye: God's Glory Reflected in His Creation

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This work is ultimately about purpose. From the vast reaches of the universe to the solitary person, what is the purpose of all we see? Why are we here? What is the motive for God's divine intervention in the affairs of humanity? My hope in writing about these themes comes from my heart's desire to see spiritual maturity in the church. I long for the church to experience the kind of maturity that develops out of a deep relationship with God, a depth of knowledge of His word and depth of ministry done in His name. Paul's prayers for the churches primarily focused on their greater knowledge of spiritual truths.¹ Paul longed for these churches to be firmly established through their knowledge of God. He prayed for them to be encouraged and even radically changed because of that knowledge. What we know about God, how we think about ourselves in relation to God, defines much of who we are. This does not make knowledge an ends unto itself. Rather, without proper knowledge of who God is and who we are, we cannot relate to our Creator and we cannot fulfill His plan for our lives. May God impact our thinking about Him that we will better comprehend the reason He does what He does. That is my motive. The goal is that we would see the purposes of God in every act of divine history and in every act of divine intervention in our lives.

No thought in this work is original to me. It is simply the amalgamation of the last few years of reading and listening to great theologians expound on the doctrines from God's Word. I hesitate to credit any specific theologian for fear of forgetting some, realizing that many of these ideas become so much a part of us that we often forget where we originally acquired them. With that said, I should credit early and often John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards who have

¹Ephesians 1:15-19, Philippians 1:9-11 and Colossians 1:9-12 are good examples of Pauline prayers.

each written much on the themes of God’s glory and His attributes. Contemporary theologians RC Sproul, John Piper and Ravi Zaccharis have greatly impacted my thinking in these areas.² More on these later, as I will quote from them in various forms throughout. The exhaustive work from the 17th-century theologian Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, has been a regular part of my reading. In several places throughout the book I put footnote quotations from Charnock’s work. By putting his thoughts below the line, this allows for some additional reading on these themes without breaking the flow of thought from the rest of the material. *The Existence and Attributes of God* is a thousand page long, theologically heavy work, but one that theologically minded individuals should read.

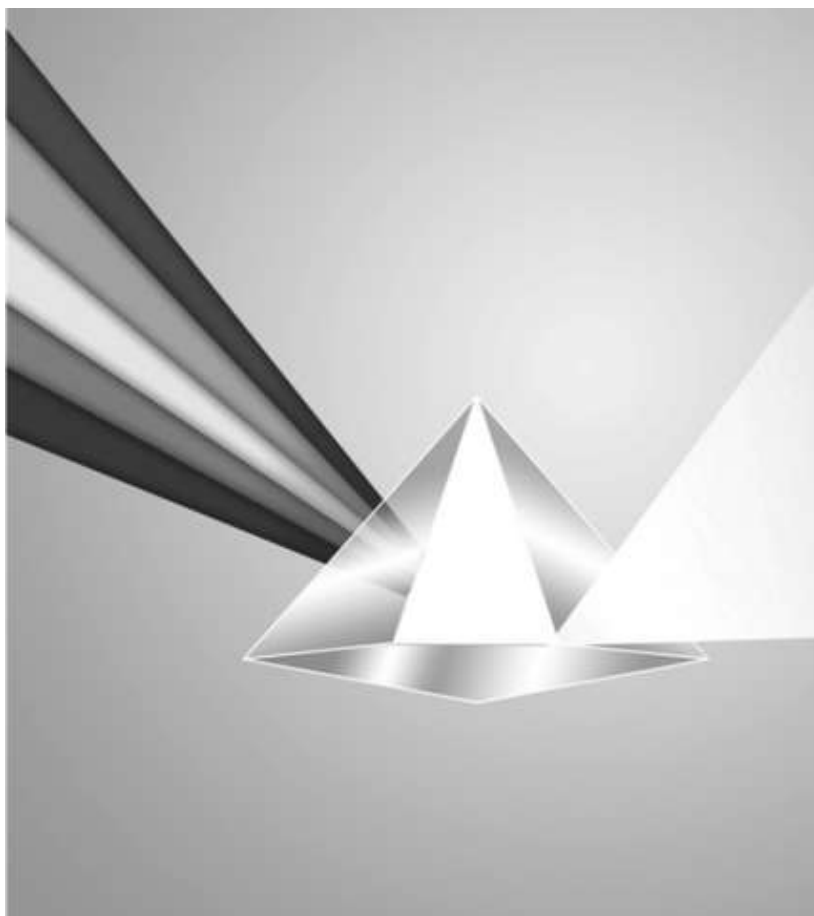
I can only respond with gratitude for the opportunity to write about these themes. It seems like much ado about nothing when contemplating the small handful of individuals who will embark on the task of reading this. If for no other reason, I am thankful for the opportunity to organize on paper what has been floating around in my head for several years. I am thankful to my wife and kids. I love them deeply, and they teach me much. I give thanks to God for my church family, Matthew Road Baptist Church. Many have driven me to think more on these themes, to teach them and to write about them, especially to my friend Phil McGlothlin who kept saying, “I think you should write these things down.” Finally, a note of thanks to the gracious proof readers: Amber Anderson, Crystal Costabile, Christy Martinez, Phil McGlothlin, Kimberly Sweet, William Sullenger, Rachel Sullenger, and Jenny White. Your comments have contributed greatly to my thinking on these matters, while also

²Books from Sproul that have helped my thinking on these themes include *The Holiness of God*, *The Attributes of God* and *Not a Chance*; from Piper, *God’s Passion for His Glory* and *Christian Hedonism*; from Ravi Zaccharis, *The Shattered Visage* and *Can Man Live Without God*. Additionally, several sermons from these three have greatly impacted my life.

protecting others from my poor grammar and spelling. And a special thank you to Robin Moser who is constantly taking undeveloped ideas and turning them into graphic designs (like the cover), making them appear better than my mind was capable of dreaming.

Now for a word of caution, the introduction, first chapter, and Appendix 2 contain more technical and theological jargon than the rest of the book. If you bog down in these sections, just skim the material and read the last couple of paragraphs of those sections, then move on. Chapters 2 through 9 and the conclusion contain less technical language and are more devotional. They should be much easier reading. Also, note that all verses are in quotes and *italic font* in order to distinguish the Biblical text from the remainder of the text.

Finally, each chapter concludes with some reflective thoughts and questions. Having observed this prism of God's attributes displayed throughout creation and divine history, what does it mean for you and me? These questions give you an opportunity to interact with the material. We must allow His desire for us to change the way we think, speak and act, changing who we are from the inside out. Now is the time to think through God's purpose for your life. May we do all of this for the glory of God.



Introduction

Glory Defined

Ephesians 2:4-7 has dominated my theological contemplation for the last two years, especially verse 7 where Paul states that salvation has come to us in order that *“in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”* This verse was printed on our bulletins during our sermon series in the book of Ephesians and has inspired the theme for our ministry in Mexico, “Displaying Grace Ministries.” Displaying grace is why God saved us. God’s desire to display His attributes of grace, mercy, love, compassion, justice and a whole host of additional characteristics, motivated God to bring about His great salvation in our lives. God desired to show the riches of His grace in His kindness, so He orchestrated all of creation and human history to that end.

The Ephesians passage precipitated my thinking about the nature of salvation. Why did God allow sin to enter the world? Why does He send His Son to save us from that sin? This passage states that God saves sinners as a way of demonstrating what is inherently true about God. God possesses the attribute of grace. God saves sinners to show that He is gracious. Saving sinners provides an outlet for God’s demonstration of that grace.

From my study of the Ephesians passage I began to contemplate God’s motivation for His other works. Just as this one verse in Ephesians prompted contemplation on the nature of salvation, other passages of Scripture propelled me to think about the nature of essential theology - who is God and why does He do what He does? Historically, theologians have said that the purpose for the existence of the universe in general, and the existence of humanity in particular, is found in the answer to the third question of the children’s catechism. Question: “Why did God make you and all things?”

Answer: “For His own glory.”³ The answer to the catechistic question claims that God made us and all things for His glory. Given the weight of clear biblical teaching in support of this statement we can easily agree that all things exist for the glory of God.⁴

From my perspective, a more perplexing set of questions emanates from this simple answer to a question expressed to children. What does it mean to say that all things exist for the glory of God? What is the relationship between creation and God’s glory? What is God’s glory?

Who Made You?

Moving back a few theological and philosophical steps, we begin with the most basic of questions. How did the universe come to be? All evidence points to its temporal nature. The universe had a beginning. The universe will have an end. Just like humans, the universe constantly changes. It ages, getting older every day. Galaxies collide with other galaxies. Stars explode and die. Our own

³A sample of a Children’s Catechism can be found at www.reformed.org/documents/child_cat.htm

⁴A few examples from Scripture are:

Psalm 19:1 *“The heavens are telling of the glory of God.”*

Habakkuk 2:14 *“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”*

I Corinthians 10:31 *“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”*

II Corinthians 4:15 *“For all things for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.”*

Ephesians 1:4-6 *“In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”*

II Timothy 4:18 *“The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

star had a beginning and will eventually run out of energy and die. The earth ages, along with the rest of us. The earth had a beginning and will come to certain end. Just like the universe, just like our sun and our planet, each of us had a beginning. There was a time when you did not exist. There is coming a time when you will die. Just like humans the universe will eventually die. The universe is not eternal.

Where did the universe come from? How did the universe begin? The Bible opens with emphatic language in addressing this most basic question. *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* The universe exists because God made it. This answers the question of causality. What caused the universe? How did it get here? God put it here. That is how the universe came into being. That is how the earth and our sun came into existence. God made the heavens and the earth and everything on the earth.

If there is no God, extremely difficult questions arise. How does a contingent, dependent, temporal universe come into being? How does non-existence become existence? Some say the universe just is or that it is eternal. This is as ridiculous as a person claiming they have no beginning or that they have always been. If asked “how did you come to be?” most will answer with statements about conception, birthdates and parents. Hopefully no one will claim that they have always been or that they were self-created. Any foolish language like that should prompt immediate scoffing - “You have NOT always been.” When confronted with the origin of the universe, any claims to eternity or self-creation should be met with similar skepticism.⁵ If the universe has a beginning someone or something

⁵Stephen Charnock in *The Existence and Attributes of God* gives five reasons why it is impossible for a human to make himself. Here is a section from the first of those five reasons. “Nothing can act before it be. The first man was not, and therefore could not make himself to be. For anything to produce itself is to act; if it acted before it was, it was then something and nothing at the same time; it then had a being before it had a being; it acted when it brought itself into being. How could it act without being? So if it

brought it into existence. The most reasonable answer to the question of how the universe came into being comes from the affirmation of Genesis 1:1. God, a non-contingent, independent, eternal being, brought the universe into existence – “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*”

In R.C. Sproul’s book *Not a Chance*, he describes a radio news report that aired when the Hubble Telescope was launched. The news report “quoted a noted scientist who declared, ‘Fifteen to seventeen billion years ago the universe exploded into being.’ The operative words are the last three, ‘exploded into being.’... Whence does something move into *being*? The only logical alternative is non-being. Does the statement mean that fifteen billion years ago the universe exploded from non-being into being?...This is so absurd that it seems to be downright silly.”⁶ In addition to this quote from his book, I once heard R.C. Sproul say that if the universe exploded into being, out of nothing, “Can you imagine the explosion nothing makes? If there was ever a time there was nothing – a million years ago, a billion years ago, a trillion years ago, what would there be now? Nothing.” It is absurd to speak of a temporary universe exploding out of nothing and into something.

It is tremendously helpful to know the cause for the universe’s existence. God made the world and everything in it. An eternal, self-existent God brought a temporary, dependent universe into existence. However, simply stating that God created the universe still leaves the fundamental question of why unanswered. Not surprisingly, the children’s catechism begins with the issue of causality. The first question of the catechism is, “Who made you?” Answer: “God made me.” The second question, “What else did God make?” Answer: “God made me and all things.” From the opening verse of the Bible,

were the cause of itself, it must be before itself as well as after itself; it was before it was; it was a cause before it was an effect.” See pages 46-48.

⁶R.C. Sproul, *Not a Chance*. (Baker Books, 1994), 15-16.

God's word clearly states that He is the source of all things. A chorus of other verses supports this claim. In addition to God's revelatory word, there is a wealth of philosophical, ethical and scientific arguments that bear on this debate. For those interested in such discussions, I commend several books to you in Appendix 1.



The Why Question

Though we may have great interest in discussions concerning causality, the focus of this book migrates away from causality and toward purpose. I am assuming that you already possess a high certainty about God's creative work. However, belief that God created you, the universe and all things in it, is not sufficient. This answers the fundamental question of how but does not get to the fundamental question of why. The deist holds to a rather scant purpose statement with their belief in an impersonal Creator. This view holds that God created the universe and then, as an unengaged and disinterested observer, He peers in occasionally just to see the outcome of His scientific experiment. In the end, this worldview is practical atheism. It addresses the overwhelming evidence that there must be a cosmic cause but fails to give a sufficient reason for the cause. Atheists believe there is no God. The deist lives as if there is

no God. Intellectually there may be a difference, but practically speaking there is no distinction.

If God is impersonal, something along the lines of the impersonal deistic force from Star Wars, then this God is neither good nor evil. That is why the children's catechism moves so quickly (just the third question out of 50 questions) from cause to purpose. The affirmation that "God made me and all things," is helpful. However, this is insufficient and irrelevant in my life if that is the beginning and end of God's involvement in the matter. Significance cannot be manufactured by insignificant pawns moving mindlessly in a deistic science experiment. Relevance must proceed from the reality of the God who personally made me and the universe. The third catechism question turns to the fundamental question of purpose, significance, and relevance. "Why did God make you and all things?" "Why?" The question is loaded with a pursuit of purpose and the answer explodes with purpose. "God made me and all things for His glory." And that is the pursuit of this book.

When my son was about four, I brought home a new laundry sorter and declared with great excitement that "we're going to put this together." Ahhh, a father son project unfurled. Opening the box and dumping all the parts into the living room floor made him extremely happy. As we began our project Austin asked, "Dada, who made this?" I grabbed the box and read the company name off the front. Assuming this would satisfy his four year old mind, I plunged back into the sorting of parts and looking at the directions. (As a side note, I only looked at the directions to assuage my wife. All men know that you only look at the directions after you have attempted to put it together and it doesn't work.) After a few moments of pause and reflection Austin asked "why?" Even a four year old sees the fallacy in the mind of the deist. No one would design, produce and sell a laundry sorter without some legitimate purpose. Why did the company make the laundry sorter? I assume they designed and built it to make money. They designed it to make a profit by producing a

product that met the needs of consumers. My four year old is more intuitive than the deist. The deist feels fairly certain there is no real purpose for the universe, at least not one we can ascertain. The atheist feels absolutely certain there is no purpose for the universe. The four year old knows instinctively that there must be a purpose behind any maker's act. Notice the personal nature of my four year olds' question, "WHO made this?" He asked WHO and not WHAT. Even four year olds know that designing and building requires a mind. There must be a mind behind every thought. A mind requires that there must be a person behind the mind. If this is so obvious that even a four year old can see it, what has happened to the atheist and the deist? Why do they talk themselves out of the clear thinking of their childhood? They instinctively know there is a purpose behind the creation but work at suppressing that knowledge.⁷ For them, the purpose behind the creation is the problem. They hate the implications of the purpose. If the cause behind the existence of the world is a personal Creator, then our behavior matters.⁸ If the universe exists for God's glory, then any behavior on my part that contradicts that purpose becomes trouble and I become accountable to the Creator. The Bible affirms in Romans 3:23 that "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" God's glory provides the underlying answer to the why question. Atheism provides freedom

⁷Romans 1:18-19 "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.*"

⁸In reflecting on practical atheism Stephen Charnock states, "There is in humanity a natural unwillingness to have any acquaintance with the rules God set...The refusing instruction and casting His Word behind us is a part of atheism. We are weary in hearing the instructions either of law or gospel, and slow in the apprehension of what we hear...A man may sooner engrave the chronicle of a whole nation, or all the records of God upon the hardest marble with his bare finger, than write one syllable of the law of God upon his heart." (pages 99-100)

from this purpose. If there is no God, we are free to behave as we wish or if God is a disinterested alchemist, we are free to live any way we desire. However, if the universe has been created as a purposeful work of a personal God, then everything matters, including my behavior. Any behavior that circumvents the intent of the Creator puts me at odds with the Creator.

Why? Why did these individuals at the company design and build a laundry sorter? “Why did God make me and all things?” “God made me and all things for His glory.” The statement brings clarity to both cause and purpose. We are here because God created us. God did this for the purpose of manifesting His glory. God made us to demonstrate His glory. God created the universe to display His glory. This brings us to the place of understanding the cause and purpose of His work. God’s desire to show His glory motivated God to create the universe. This is the reason we are here. You and I, we exist for the glory of God. What is God’s glory? How do things like the creation, the Bible, His Son Jesus, history and the church demonstrate His glory? To understand how each of these may be instrumental in accomplishing this goal, we will spend some time defining the term “glory.” After defining the term, we will take a look at the various ways aspects of God’s work achieves this goal.

Uses of the Term Glory

There are at least five uses of the term glory. The primary use denotes an attribute of God. God is glorious. This is His nature. He bears the character of glory. Just as when we say a child is tall or short or cute, the child bears the attribute of tallness or shortness or cuteness. In the case of God, He is glorious. I Chronicles 16:23-25 says, “...Sing to the LORD, all the earth... Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples. For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised.” God possesses the attribute of glory.

Glory can also refer to the place where God dwells. Glory functions as another word for heaven. For instance, Jesus on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:25-26 said to His traveling companions, “*O foolish men ... Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?*” Glory is a place where Christ went after the crucifixion and resurrection. He entered into His glory. When Jesus Christ returns He will bring all believers to that same place. Glory is a place, a place where Christ currently dwells and a place where all believers will one day dwell. In this way, glory functions as a synonym for heaven. God is glorious, and glory is the place where His glory dwells.

Glory describes the physical transformation that takes place when Christians go to heaven. Nothing in heaven can be inglorious. Everything in God’s presence receives a complete and instant makeover. In heaven we will experience the greatest before and after imaginable. Before this transformation we are feeble, frail, weak and dying. When Christ returns, we will take on a glorified body, one that does not grow weary or break down. We will receive a new body that will last forever. God is glorious. Heaven is glorious. Therefore, all who dwell with God in His heaven must be made glorious just like the Son.

Glory also denotes an act of worship. One aspect of worship is ascribing to God His attribute of glory. The angels do this during the announcement of Christ’s birth. In Luke 2:14 they said to the shepherds, “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.*” God is glorious and ascribing glory to God is an act of worship.

On a few occasions this term is applied to nations, people and places. For instance, Jesus stated in Matthew 6:29 that, “*Solomon in all his glory...*” could not dress as excellently as the lilies of the field. Solomon was glorious in his ability to dress in fine clothing. He just failed to dress as impressively as field lilies. The temple Solomon built represented magnificence, fame and glory to all the nations. The

temple possessed a limited glory.⁹ In addition to Solomon and the temple there are several examples in the Bible of nations, people and places bearing the attribute of glory. These people and places possessed splendor, reputation, wealth, and beauty.

These five uses of glory are found throughout Scripture. Glory describes an attribute of God, a place where God dwells, a transformation of God's people, and an act of worship. Though limited, at times this divine attribute is applied to people and places. Each use derives its meaning from the primary use of the term. Glory describes the essential character of God. He is glorious. Therefore, the place He dwells must be glorious; the individuals who dwell in that place must share in that glory; and the only reasonable response to God's glorious presence is to give Him glory. A more extensive discussion on these issues can be found in Appendix 2.

The Glory of God Defined

Now returning to the primary use of the word we can develop a working definition of glory as an attribute of God. God is glorious. He possesses the attribute of glory. The New International Encyclopedia of the Bible states that God's glory is "a comprehensive term...reflecting such qualities as esteem, reputation, worth, honor...particularly appropriate for describing His moral uniqueness and grandeur as Lord of the universe,"¹⁰ a comprehensive term indeed. Glory describes all that God is. His glory encompasses His nature in total.

Throughout creation and history God displays His character. God shows attributes like grace, mercy, justice, kindness, love, wrath and power. The universe and all acts of God in human history reflect

⁹1 Chronicles 22:5 "...the house that is to be built for the LORD shall be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all lands."

¹⁰E. F. Harrison, "Glory" in The New International Encyclopedia of the Bible, vol. 2. (Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 478.

God's glory in that they reflect specific attributes. Take for instance the grace of God. All things are for His glory, and salvation is part of the category of "all things." Therefore, from Paul's statement in Ephesians 2:7, "*His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*" must fall within the subcategory of God's glory. Grace and kindness are part of God's glory. They are subsets of the larger set of attributes. In other words, all things are for the glory of God, and grace and kindness are subsets of that glory.

In several verses throughout Scripture the glory of God manifests through His other attributes. The comprehensive term of God's glory becomes known when the specific attributes of God are made evident. He is glorious because of what He does.¹¹ He is glorious because He is strong.¹² He is glorious because He is holy.¹³ He is glorious because He is gracious.¹⁴ In understanding this, if we reflect on God's glory as a comprehensive term, it is a term that describes the coalescence of the attributes of God. **God's "glory" describes the summation of all of His attributes.** The glory of God describes all that God is and all that He has done. Only heaven will allow us to experience all of God's glory. Only heaven will provide the unmuted vision of all God is. In heaven, believers receive the eternal reward of seeing Him in all of His glorious attributes simultaneously. In the interim, we experience and observe individual

¹¹Psalm 96:3 "*Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.*"

¹²Psalm 24:8 "*Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle.*"

¹³Isaiah 6:3 "*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.*"

¹⁴Ephesians 1:4-6 "*... In love, He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.*"

attributes of God. These individual attributes allow us to reflect on the comprehensive nature of God's glory.

Glory is not the only inclusive term used in Scripture to describe God. Majesty, honor and splendor are also used as inclusive descriptors of God. However, the etymology of "glory" and its use throughout the Old Testament give credence to the term "glory" as the most complete and comprehensive of all the attributive terms. The Hebrew noun meaning "glory" finds its derivation from the Hebrew verb which means "to be heavy." Glory in the Old Testament is used at times to describe "the weighty" character of buildings, humans, nations and God.¹⁵ When glory is applied to humans, it usually describes the individual's "character, position, wealth or power."¹⁶ In Genesis 31, Jacob is described as possessing glory, with reference to his material possessions.¹⁷ As mentioned above, the temple possessed "glory" because of its beauty and its reputation outside the nation of Israel. The temple was "weighed down" with riches and beauty.

In the book of Exodus, the glory of the Lord was an important theme in Israel's ongoing encounter with God. They saw the glory of the Lord manifested in the form of a cloud in the wilderness in Exodus chapter 16. Later, as the nation gathered at the base of Mount Sinai, the glory of the Lord descends upon the mountain in Exodus 24:16, "*The glory of the Lord rested upon Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it for six days,*" And in Exodus 40:34-35, "*the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had*

¹⁵Gerhard Von Rad, "doxa," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, ed. Gerhard Kittel,(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 238.

¹⁶E. F. Harrison, 478.

¹⁷Genesis 31:1 "*Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, 'Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from ... our father he has made all this wealth (glory).'*"

settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” This theophany is repeated at the dedication of Solomon’s temple, as described in I Kings 8 and II Chronicles 5. God’s glory filled the newly constructed temple. God’s presence overwhelmed the priests as they were unable to enter the temple because of the glory of the Lord.

One of the more dramatic moments in the encounters between humanity and God involved Moses on Mount Sinai. Moses, having experienced God’s glory manifested in the cloud, sought something more from God. He pleaded with God, *“Show me your glory.”* God warned Moses that no person can experience His full glory and live. However, God says to Moses in Exodus 33:19, *“I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.”* Moses, forbidden from experiencing the fullness of God’s glory, experienced a portion of God’s glory. Moses encounters God’s goodness and compassion. This passage, along with several others, presents the glory of God as a comprehensive term with other attributes as a subset of His glory. God’s glory is the coalescence of the panoply of His attributes. His glory describes all that He is and all that He does. Each attribute of God points back to the attributes of God in total. God’s grace points to the glory of God. God’s power directs us back to the glory of God. God’s holiness propels us back to the glory of God. God displays His glory by displaying individual aspects of His glory.

One way we see this distinction between the individual attributes of God and the comprehensive nature of the glory of God emerges in John’s description of the Son of God, Jesus. In John 1:14, the apostle says, *“we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* John says that the disciples observed the glorious nature of Christ. In general, *“we saw His glory.”* Specifically, they observed grace and truth in the life of

Christ. These specific attributes of Christ point back to the broader attribute of His glory. Christ is glorious because He possesses the attributes of the Father. In particular, two of those attributes are grace and truth, just as His Father possesses grace and truth. Glory gives a comprehensive depiction of the character of Christ. Grace and truth are individual attributes distinguished within the panoply of divine attributes. Christ demonstrated these attributes in His life and ministry. In Christ, individual attributes point back to the comprehensive collection of all divine attributes.

Glory is an attribute of God. God is glorious. More than other inclusive terms, this comprehensive term summarizes all of His attributes. Glory describes all that God is and all that He does. His glory is the coalescence of all divine attributes. In heaven, all those who are children of God will see Him in all His glory. We will experience all of the attributes of God without hindrance. In glory we will see the glory of God through our glorified eyes, experience this in our glorified bodies and raise our glorified voices to sing of the glorious nature of our God and Savior. Then, for the first time in our lives, we will see what we were meant to see, the purpose for our creation.

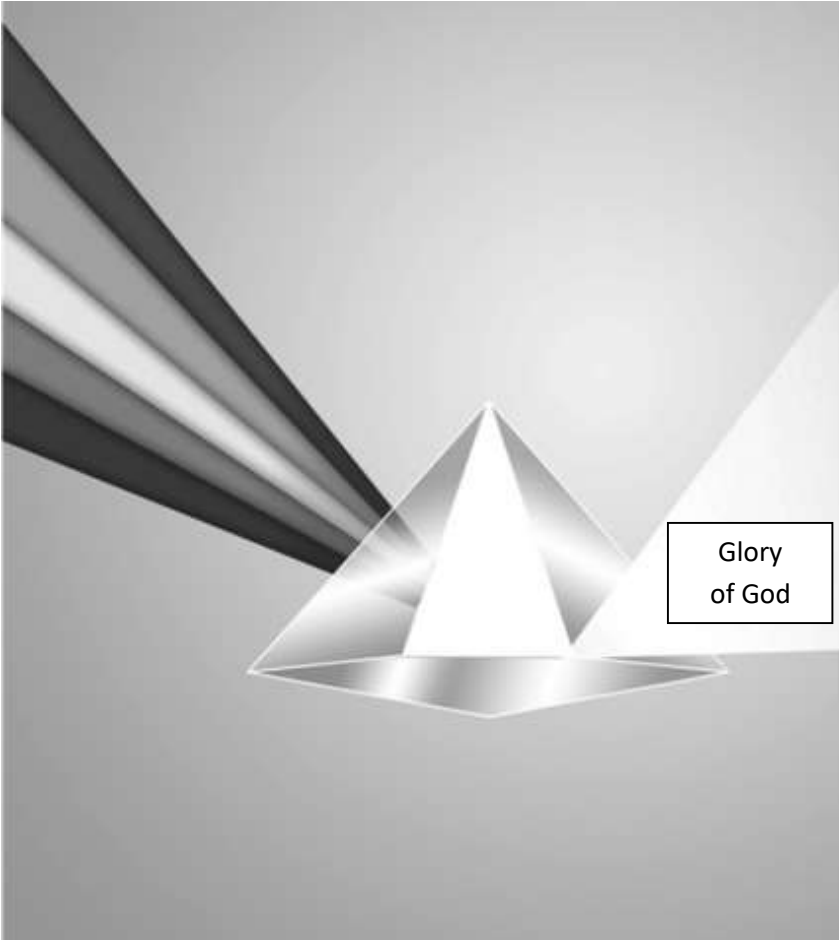
Now to expound on these themes more fully, I hope to give justification to these claims through focusing on the particular role of the original creation account in the display of God's specific attributes. In subsequent volumes we will focus on God's interactions with humanity, especially through Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets and the nation of Israel as displays of His specific attributes. We will also explore the dramatic demonstration of God's glorious attributes in the life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of His Son. The final volume will provide a reflection on God's glory portrayed in the work of salvation, the institute of the church, the lives of individuals and the nature of heaven. The appendix of this book provides some additional notes and suggested

reading list along with a more technical defense of some of these themes.

Questions and Reflections

Romans 5:1-2 says, *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.”*

1. The word “glory” contains much hope for Paul. *“We exult in the hope of the glory of God.”* The glory of God is the purpose for which we have been made. We see that the glory of God is something He shares with His adopted children. If we are His children, He shares it with us forever. Have you come to a place in your life where the thought of dying and facing God in all His glory brings you any hope? If so, on what basis do you hope in the glory of God?
2. Paul’s hope in the glory of God is based on *“having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Every human experience with God recorded in Scripture produces a trauma for the individual. Peace with God and the glory of God seem incompatible. How does Christ bring peace between us and His Father? How does peace with God produces hope in the glory of God?



Glory
of God

Chapter 1

Glory and the Prism of God

Show and Tell

When I was in elementary school, we had show and tell on Fridays. When it was my turn, I longed to wow the class. I wanted my moment of show and tell to be the greatest on the planet. Since my last name is so late in the alphabet, my turn usually fell toward the end of the school year. This gave me time to observe others and to really think about the best way to stand out among the masses. In second grade, after listening to the paltry offerings of my classmates for twenty weeks, I finally got my chance. My selection – a miniature Civil War canon I purchased on our family vacation the summer prior. The class was mesmerized (actually they mostly ignored the entire 30 second presentation, but I'm retelling the story with no refuting eyewitnesses). I finally got my chance to show something of great value to me and it brought me great joy.

In the same way, God hosts show and tell. Unlike my one Friday out of the year, God's show and tell occurs continuously. Creation becomes an instrument through which God shows His attributes. His intervention in the course of human history becomes another tool through which God puts His attributes on display. God works in my life and in yours, bringing salvation, producing good works and preserving you in and through death. God speaks through the Bible, demonstrating His attributes as they are communicated through written words. All of these works function as a means to an end. They are God's show and tell. God demonstrates His specific attributes through His works.

God fully possesses all of His attributes at all times and in all circumstances. Just as I possessed my miniature Civil War canon before and after show and tell, God fully possesses all of His attributes whether they are on display or not. He chooses when and

how to display His attributes. He demonstrates His particular attributes in specific divine works at specific moments for maximum impact. His intentionality in this allows us to focus our minds on His specific attributes. Each one of these attributes is infinitely beautiful and infinitely glorious. For instance, the creation of the stars reflects God's power (and a host of other attributes) while God's kindness may not be readily obvious when studying the heavens. The cross of Jesus reflects God's justice and mercy (and a host of other attributes) but the attribute of God's invincibility may be cloaked in that event – at least until the resurrection when the invincibility of God is demonstrated in full force. God communicates each of these attributes with purpose and intent. Nothing that God does is by accident. He acts in a manner to maximize the revelation of His own glory for His own pleasure. It pleases God to reveal His attributes. He created the universe in order to accomplish His revelatory desire.

This does not imply some weakness in God. God does not NEED to disclose His character. As humans, we can distinguish between needs and desires. There are many desires that bring joy but are not essential to providing life. I enjoy watching a good football game. It is not a need in my life, but a decidedly enjoyable experience. I enjoyed the show and tell of the Civil War cannon. I enjoyed that experience, but it was not necessary. God does not need to have His glory revealed. Instead, He chooses to disclose His glory.

Jonathan Edwards gives us some help on this front. In *The End for Which God Made the World*, Jonathan Edwards says that it seems “proper and desirable, that the glorious attributes of God... should be exerted in the production of such effects as might manifest his infinite power, wisdom, righteousness and goodness.”¹⁸ Edwards goes on to argue that these attributes and many more would still be present within the Godhead without the creation but without the

¹⁸Jonathan Edwards *The End for Which God Made the World*, (in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 1, Hendrickson Publishing, 2000), 99.

creation “these attributes never would have had any exercise.”¹⁹ God inherently possesses these attributes. However, it brings God delight to “exercise” His attributes. Edwards reflects on the joy and goodness manifest in our own lives because God has made His glorious perfections known to rational beings beside Himself. God’s desire to demonstrate His attributes does not reflect weakness in God. Again, Edwards is helpful at this point. He argues from the analogy of a fountain. A fountain filled with water is not defective simply because it is prone to overflow. Edwards says, “we may suppose, that a disposition in God...to an emanation of his own infinite fullness, was what excited him to create the world.”²⁰ For Edwards, it is not an inadequacy in God that prompts creation, but a completeness and fullness in God that precipitates His desire to communicate His glorious attributes. God is so full of His own attributes that they spill over, out of the Godhead and into creation, like the waters breaking forth from an overflowing fountain.

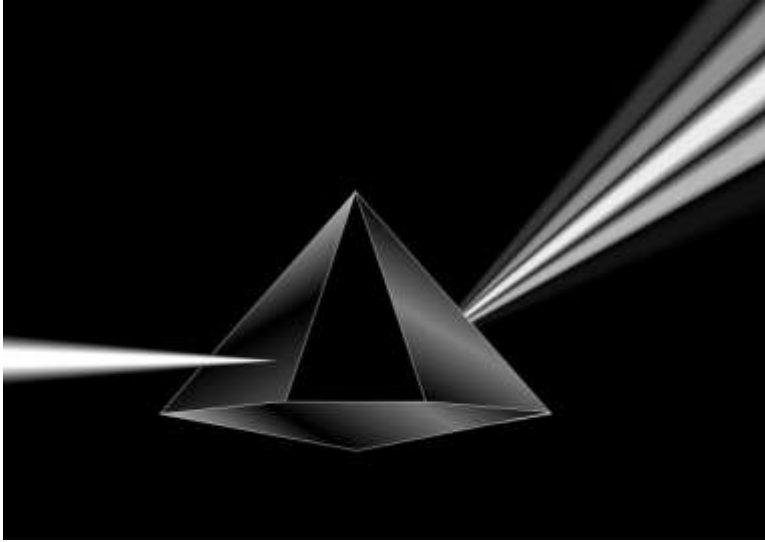
How clearly has God communicated His attributes? According to Romans 1:20, God has made Himself and His attributes obvious to all, “*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*” According to Paul, God has made His glory known through the obvious show of His invisible attributes and divine nature. How are invisible attributes clearly seen? The attributes of God are seen in His creation “*being understood through what has been made.*” One Puritan described it this way, “God has left large footprints throughout His creation.” Paul claimed that the knowledge of God gets through, not just an affirmation concerning God’s existence, but an understanding of the basic nature of God.

¹⁹ibid.

²⁰ibid, 100.

“They are without excuse.” What excuse might someone make? “I didn’t know there was a God.” Or “There wasn’t enough evidence in order for me to believe in God.” Paul says that the evidence is so clear that such excuses will not work. God has communicated His divine nature in such a way that it does not take an advanced degree in philosophy or theology or science to see God’s attributes. Everyone sees God’s creative work and knows what God is like. In this case, Paul gives some of the attributes evidenced in the creation. God is eternal and He is powerful. *“His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen...”* Those who refuse to see God’s glory in His creation make a conscious decision to ignore the evidence. It takes a dark heart to fail to observe God in His creation.²¹

²¹Stephen Charnock writes in his section on the existence of God, “It is a great folly to deny or doubt the existence or being of God ... A secret atheism, or a partial atheism, is the spring of all the wicked practices in the world: the disorders of the life spring from the ill dispositions of the heart ... Every atheist is a grand fool. If he were not a fool, he would not imagine a thing so contrary to the stream of the universal reason of the world, contrary to the rational dictates of his own soul, and contrary to the testimony of every creature, and link in the chain of creation: if he were not a fool, he would not strip himself of humanity, and degrade himself lower than the most despicable brute. It is a folly; for though God be so inaccessible that we cannot know him perfectly, yet he is so much in the light, that we cannot be totally ignorant of him; as he cannot be comprehended in his essence, he cannot be unknown in his existence; it is as easy by reason to understand that he is, as it is difficult to know what he is. The demonstrations reason furnishes us with for the existence of God, will be evidences of the atheist’s folly. One would think there were little need of spending time in evidencing this truth, since in the principle of it, it seems to be so universally owned, and at the first proposal and demand, gains the assent of most men ... We must first believe that he is, and that he is what he declares himself to be, before we can seek him, adore him, and devote our affections to him.



Glory and the Prism of God

Creation is just one of several tools God uses to reflect His glory. The glory of God is the comprehensive expression of all of His attributes. Each work of God accentuates one or more of His attributes. The individual attributes of God point back to God and the sum expression of all of His attributes.

Let me illustrate this through an example from physics. In the study of light, scientists tell us that white light is actually the coalescence of all the spectrum of waves of light. Condensed light is white in appearance, but when that light is put through a prism, the individual colors become visible – an array of colors like a rainbow. God’s glory is like white light, the condensed expression of all His attributes coalesced into one expression. Divine works in history function like a prism allowing us to see the individual attributes of God with greater clarity. We can think of the cross as a prism reflecting God’s individual attributes of mercy and justice. The cross

We cannot pay God a due and regular homage, unless we understand him in his perfections, what he is; and we can pay him no homage at all, unless we believe that he is.” 25-26.

becomes the manifestation of the glory of God, separated into the component parts of mercy and justice in that specific event. The stars function as a prism, focusing the mind on the omnipotence of God. In that case, the creation of the stars and our observance of the stars functions as a prism to demonstrate His power. God's individual works in creation and history display specific attributes of God and point us back to the coalescence of all of God's attributes, namely His glory. Just as the spectrum of colors of light points back to the source of white light, God's individual attributes point us back to the source of those attributes. God is infinitely glorious and He has put His glory on display. Therefore, all things exist for His glory.

Edwards mixes his metaphors in regards to the spilling over of the attributes of God in the creation. God's attributes are like the water in a fountain that spills over the side of the fountain and into creation. In this, Edwards also embraces the analogy of light. "Thus it is fitting, since there is an infinite fountain of light and knowledge, that this light should shine forth in beams of communicated knowledge and understanding."²² Fountains overflowing and light shining forth provide Edwards' two illustrations of God's communicated attributes.

There is some biblical precedence for the linking of God's glory with the analogy of light. The glory of God in the Old Testament is sometimes referred to as the shekinah glory of God (literally the dwelling place of the glory of God), a manifestation of God's glory represented by a cloud at the dedication of the tabernacle and as radiant light too powerful for the human eye during the grand opening of Solomon's temple.²³ I Chronicles 7:1-3 says, "*Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the*

²²Jonathan Edwards, 100.

²³Albrecht Oepke, "lampo ktl," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 23.

LORD filled the house. The priests could not enter into the house of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD'S house. All the sons of Israel, seeing the fire come down and the glory of the LORD upon the house, bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave praise to the LORD, 'Truly He is good, truly His lovingkindness is everlasting.'" Notice the attribute- laced praise from the sons of Israel. They see the glory of God, and they list His attributes of goodness, lovingkindness, and eternity. Paul may have drawn on the concept of the shekinah glory of God (the dwelling place of the glory of God) in I Timothy 6:15-16 when he says, *"He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see."*

The prologue to the book of Hebrews, Hebrew 1:1-3, uses similar language with reference to Christ. *"God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power."* Christ is the radiance of the Father's glory, representing the attributes of God perfectly. This author draws an analogy from the physical world. He compares the glory of Christ as "radiant" just like His Father. This radiance of glory finds its specific manifestation in the nature (attributes, character) of God

As mentioned in the introduction, there is a connection between the specific attributes of God and the broader term "glory." Psalm 105:3 links God's glory with His moral goodness as the psalmist urges readers to *"Glory in His holy name."* Isaiah 6:3 also connects God's glory with His moral goodness as the angels sing the trisagion of *"holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty"* combined with the statement that *"the whole earth is filled with His glory."* I Chronicles 29:11 communicates a series of attributes including God's

greatness, power, glory, victory, majesty, dominion and His exaltation. Two verses later, reflection on these attributes prompts the writer to declare, *“We praise Your glorious name.”* In listing these attributes, the psalmist anticipates a natural response by the reader. Praise flows from us when we see who God is, especially as we acknowledge His attributes. His name is glorious because He is glorious. He is glorious because of His many attributes.

In the prologue to John’s Gospel, the reader is reminded of Moses’ limitations with reference to experiencing all of God’s glory, *“No one has seen God at any time.”* No one has seen God because no one can see God and live. God Himself gave that prohibition to Moses at Mount Sinai. However, the Logos (the Word) breaks into the world and overcomes this human limitation by revealing God’s glory, *“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* According to John 1:14 the disciples behold the glory of the Son of God. Even the glory of the Logos (meaning Word which is used as a synonym for Christ) was exhibited through specific, individual attributes of grace and truth. The glory of God was experienced in the life of Christ through the observable nature of Christ with reference to these individual attributes. When John reflected on his encounters with Christ, the attributes of God’s grace and truth immediately came to mind. Christ is glorious, and His glory is revealed in these two attributes.

All things exist for God’s glory. All creation and each individual work of God in creation display specific attributes of God. Stating this concept again, glory is the term to summarize all of these attributes condensed or coalesced in a single expression. **God’s “glory” describes the summation of all of His attributes.** In His presence God’s glory continually shines and all who believed in the Son of God will spend all eternity comprehending and apprehending His glory.

Until then there is the daily reflection of God's glory. His glory is shown in the individual attributes of God woven into the fabric of our lives. The moment God saved us He saved us for His glory. In particular, you are God's grace on display. God's grace is on display in our lives, not just for our friends and neighbors to behold the grace of God, but for all of the heavens and earth to behold His grace as well. Both now and forever God says of those whom He has saved, "There goes My grace on display." He does this for His own pleasure. Just as the second grader longs to share the treasure of his life with his fellow classmates, God rejoices to share the treasure of His glory. God Himself rejoices in His grace on display in our lives. We will forever be a reflection of the greatness of His grace, kindness, love and mercy.²⁴

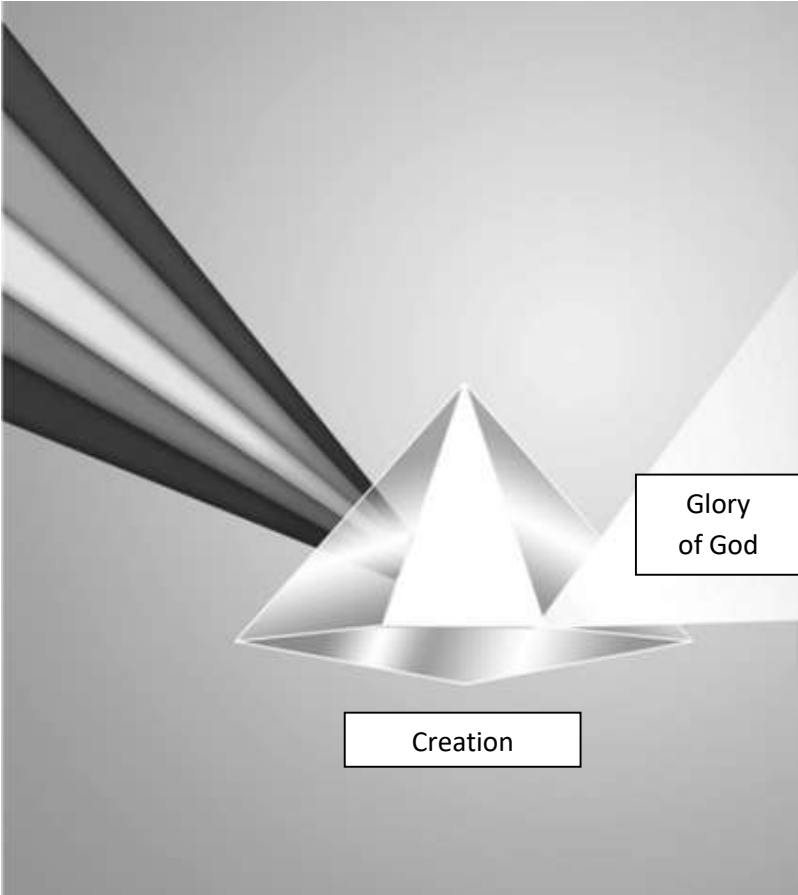
Ultimately, we exist as individuals, as a community of faith and as part of creation, to demonstrate the attributes of God. Our primary audience in this Show and Tell is God Himself. We exist for His glory. Everyday our focus must remain on doing the things that best reflect His glory. We too must function as instruments of God. We too must function as individual prisms through which the glory of God is manifest by bringing clarity to His goodness, mercy, truth, faithfulness, and the host of other attributes. May God be glorified in His people as we reflect and live out His purposes.

²⁴In Stephen Charnock's section on the eternity of God he writes, "The enjoyment of God will be as fresh and glorious after many ages, as it was at first. God is eternal, and eternity knows no change; there will then be the fullest possession without any decay in the One enjoyed. There can be nothing past, nothing future; time neither adds to Him, nor detracts from Him. That infinite fullness of perfection which flourishes in Him now, will flourish eternally, without any discoloring of it by those innumerable ages that shall run to eternity, much less any despoiling of them...As God is, so will the eternity of him be, without succession, without division; the fullness of joy always present; without past to be thought of with regret; without future to be expected with tormenting desires. When we enjoy God, we enjoy him in his eternity without any flux." 298.

Questions and Reflections

During the liberation of Israel out of enslavement in Egypt, God says to Pharaoh in Exodus 9:16, *“for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.”*

1. God could have justly ended the standoff with Pharaoh after the first plague. He allowed the battle to continue even after several plagues that demonstrated His overwhelming power. He told Pharaoh why He allowed the battle to continue even though there was only one possible ending. *“I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name...”* This is the desire of God. He desires to show His power and to have His name proclaimed. He extends this event with Pharaoh for His name’s sake. God gives life to us. Every breath comes from Him. What does God wish to demonstrate about Himself in your life today? What attribute of God can He manifest through you?
2. The Exodus results in the liberation of a people. More than that, the Exodus results in proclamation of the name of God because of His mighty works. What work of God in your life will you proclaim in order to exalt His name to others today?



Creation

Glory
of God

Chapter 2

Creation and the Glory of God

Psalm 19:1 “The heavens are telling of the glory of God”

King David was the author of several of the psalms. Crafting these poetic verses provided him an avenue for praising God. He praised God for God’s work in the life of Israel and for blessing them as a nation. David praised God for saving his life and for blessing his kingdom reign over Israel. David also praised God for the creation. In Psalm 19 he declared, “*The heavens are telling of the glory of God.*” The King of Israel stated that the heavens (inanimate objects, lifeless, soulless, collections of atoms) declare God’s glory. The heavens tell a story. They speak of God’s glorious character. It is not that the stars communicate audibly. Instead, they tell God’s story through their beauty. In telling God’s story, they give testimony to specific, observable attributes of God. God is a God of revelation. He reveals His plans and His purposes. In this case God reveals His glory through the stars. The glory of God speaks of all that God does and all that He is. The heavens declare this about God. The heavens declare His glory.

God calls on His creation to speak concerning His plans and purposes. He commands His creation to communicate His attributes. It is not just the stars and galaxies through which God proclaims His beauty and His wisdom. Even the smallest, seemingly most insignificant creatures proclaim God’s glory. The following is an excerpt from *Recapture the Wonder* by Ravi Zacharias.

The red knot is a sandpiper that each year journeys from the southern tip of South America to the eastern shores of the United States and beyond and then back again. That round-trip expedition, which covers more than eighteen thousand miles every year, takes the red knot through the arctic islands of the

Canadian North, making brief “refueling” stops on the beaches of Delaware Bay and Cape Cod.

The birds begin their northward journey in February each year, hundreds of thousands of them, up the coast of Argentina, over Brazil, with periodic stops to feed. From the northern coasts of South America, they take to the air for a nonstop week of soaring above the Atlantic that brings them around mid-May to touch ground on the marshy shore of Delaware Bay at the very time horseshoe crabs are laying their eggs by the millions. When you consider that during their sojourn in Delaware each red knot might consume 135,000 horseshoe crab eggs, you know they need that stop and time it perfectly. Plumped up for the remainder of their marathon across the vast Canadian terrain, they make their final stop north of Hudson Bay. There, in ideal northern summer conditions, they mate and breed, each female laying four speckled eggs, which she and her mate take turns incubating.

Baby red knots build up their bodies soon with the feathers growing fairly rapidly. There is an incredibly scripted schedule for everything in the process. By mid-July, the females leave the males and their offspring, and start heading south again. The males leave almost exactly one week later. The little ones fend for themselves and then, in late August, they commence their nine-thousand-mile journey to Tierra del Fuego. They begin that flight, their first of such magnitude, without parental companionship. Somehow, with a precise “destination” in mind, as if equipped by flawless radar and instruction, they make their way from northern Canada along the eastern American coast and across the Atlantic to Guyana, Surinam, knowing precisely where to make their sojourns for food. And then, in what appears like a dated and timed appointment, “coming in on a beam,” they rejoin the family at Tierra del Fuego for the southern summer.

Here, on the balmy beaches of Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America, they feast, fattening themselves. A long molt and ideal temperatures combine to replace their beaten feathers so that they are ready for the long journey back north. What it takes a whole crew of highly skilled men and women at a pit stop in the Indianapolis 500 or a coterie of mechanics and ground staff to get a plane ready for its return flight, the red knot does by its own wit and understanding of natural resources.²⁵

The heavens declare the glory of God. So do the birds. What attributes of God do we see in the Red Knot? At minimum, we see the wisdom of God and the grandeur of God in the intricate details of the universe.²⁶ We see the reflection of His omniscience and His continual presence in every atom of the universe, all communicated in this remarkable flight. The Red Knot's migratory patterns function as a prism through which we observe the remarkable plan and design of God in His creation. I have observed this in a similar pattern of the migratory flight of the monarch butterfly. Every year the monarch butterfly population migrates north for the summer and south for the winter. During the summer they can be seen all over North America. In the fall, they return thousands of miles to the same monarch

²⁵Ravi Zacharias Recapture the Wonder, 14-16.

²⁶From Stephen Charnock's section on the Wisdom of God, "Wisdom consists in observing all circumstances for action. He is counted a wise man that lays hold of the best opportunities to bring about his designs, that has the fullest foresight of all the little intrigues which may happen in a business he is to manage, and times every part of his action in an exact harmony with the proper minutes of it. God has all the circumstances of things in one entire image before him; he has a prospect of every little creek in any design. He sees what second causes will act, and when they will act this way or that; he determines them so that it is impossible he should be mistaken, or miss of the due season of bringing about his own purposes. As he has more goodness than to deceive any, so he has more understanding than to be mistaken in anything." 507.

reserves in western and central Mexico. Amazingly, none of the butterflies make the round trip. The life span of the butterfly is far too short. The butterfly population returns to nesting sites and not one of them is a repeat customer. All of these delicate insect travelers make one and only one trip. Incredibly, some even travel from the southern tip of Florida across the Gulf of Mexico in order to arrive at their destination. Imagine, butterflies traversing the Gulf of Mexico. How do they find the right place? No evolutionary explanation can effectively answer this question. None of them have ever been there before. Who is guiding these fragile creatures to these locations, Darwin? God guides them for the purpose of demonstrating His wisdom and design in nature. Examples like this from nature are legion. Everywhere we look we see God's handiwork in His creation.



The heavens declare the glory of God. Birds declare the glory of God. Butterflies also declare the glory of God. Though the Bible does not give us specific reasons for why butterflies were designed to migrate, it is reasonable to conclude that certain aspects of the Creator's handiwork can be observed in their flight. The infinite Creator is revealed in the details drawn from the life of the smallest creatures.

This line of discussion, observing nature as a means of seeing the grandeur of God, is not unique to Ravi Zacharias and certainly not to this book. God Himself uses this approach in several places in

scripture. Psalm 19:1 focuses on cosmological evidence for God's glory. *"The heavens declare the glory of God."* In the Book of Job, God uses zoological arguments to present His glory. You may remember that Job encountered a series of personal trials and is questioning why God allowed these troubles into his life. He lost his family, wealth and health. Deeply affected by these losses, he began to question the justice of God. Job asked the why question. Why did God allow these tragedies in Job's life? Why does God allow certain events to transpire in our lives? Job's friends came to comfort him. They too were searching for the cause of Job's trials. None of the answers to these questions seemed to fully grasp God's purposes and plans. Neither Job nor his friends adequately explain why this happened to him. Toward the end of the book, God comes to Job in rather dramatic fashion, answering to the complete satisfaction of Job and friends why He has the right to do what He does.

Interestingly, God gave Job a summary view of what creation communicates about His divine nature. God says to Job, *"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?"* (Job 38:4) The obvious answer to this rhetorical question is, "I wasn't born yet. I wasn't around when You made the earth." God put the planet together without our assistance. From geological arguments, God moves rapidly to zoology. God defends His justice and wisdom through examples evidenced in His creation. Just as the example of the red knot given in Ravi Zacharias book illustrates the incredible work of its designer, God makes a similar appeal to Job. In Job 39:26, God asked, *"Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars?"* The red knot migrates and the hawk soars. Both demonstrate God's greatness. In example after example, God gave Job a case study in the complexity and beauty of the creation. In the end Job declared in Job 39:26, *"I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted... Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know."* The Book of Job functions as my defense for drawing inferences from

the creation about the Creator. My desire in doing so is to produce worship in our lives. May we say with Job, *“I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.”*

Linking specific elements of creation to God’s specific attributes may be imprecise. It may be imprecise, but it is a worthy exercise. There are claims in each of the following chapters about specific aspects of the creation and their link to the Creator’s intent in revealing specific aspects of His overall character. I confess that my conclusions may not perfectly link the event with the attribute. However, I believe I have rightly identified attributes belonging to God. Each of the attributes is clearly articulated in the Bible as belonging to God. My direct connection with certain attributes of God and particular aspects of Genesis 1 and 2 comes from my own reflection on the creation and on the attributes of God. You may see some different aspects of creation that point back to particular attributes of the Creator’s character. If we open our eyes to the beauty, complexity and immensity of the creation, we will exalt and praise God.

My desire is that we will take some time from our overly busy lives to contemplate God and His creation. In contemplating the nature of God, all that He is and all that He does, may we respond to our reflections by worshiping the God who made us. Saint Anselm opens his devotional work, *Address to God Concerning His Existence*, with this stirring challenge to believers. **“COME now poor child, turn awhile from your business, hide yourself for a little time from restless thoughts, cast away your troublesome cares, put aside your wearisome distractions. Give yourself a little leisure to converse with God, and take your rest awhile in Him. Enter into the secret chamber of your heart: leave everything but God and what may help you to seek after Him...Say now to God, *I seek Your face; Your***

face, Lord, do I seek. Come now then, O Lord my God, teach my heart when and how I may seek You...You have created me and created me anew, and all good things that I have, You have given me, and yet I have never known You. I was created to behold You, and yet I have never unto this day done that for which I was created. O miserable lot, to have lost that for which I was created! O hard and terrible condition! We have lost the blessedness for which we were created, and we have found the misery for which we were not created...Turn and look upon us, O Lord: hear our prayer and enlighten us; reveal Yourself. Restore to us Your presence that it may be well with us; for without You we have nothing; for without You we can do nothing."

As Anselm said, without God we can do nothing. We cannot observe His character without His help. We cannot praise Him without His work in our lives. My prayer is that God would be praised and exalted as we seek Him in all His glory. We are incapable of accomplishing this. He cannot be seen in the fullness of His glory for "*No one can see Me and live.*" We cannot do this without His help. As we explore the creation of God may He enlighten us and reveal Himself to us. What divine attributes are disclosed in Genesis chapters 1 and 2? What do time and space, stars and galaxies, light and darkness, life and death, communicate about God? We are incapable of experiencing God in all His fullness. However, in Psalm 34:8 we are capable and even called by God to "*taste and see that the Lord is good.*" Engage your physical senses and allow your physical observations to awaken your spiritual senses. Does the creation engage your spiritual taste buds? We should explore some of the possibilities...

Questions and Reflections

Anselm quotes from Psalm 27:4, “*One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: 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 meditate in His temple.*”

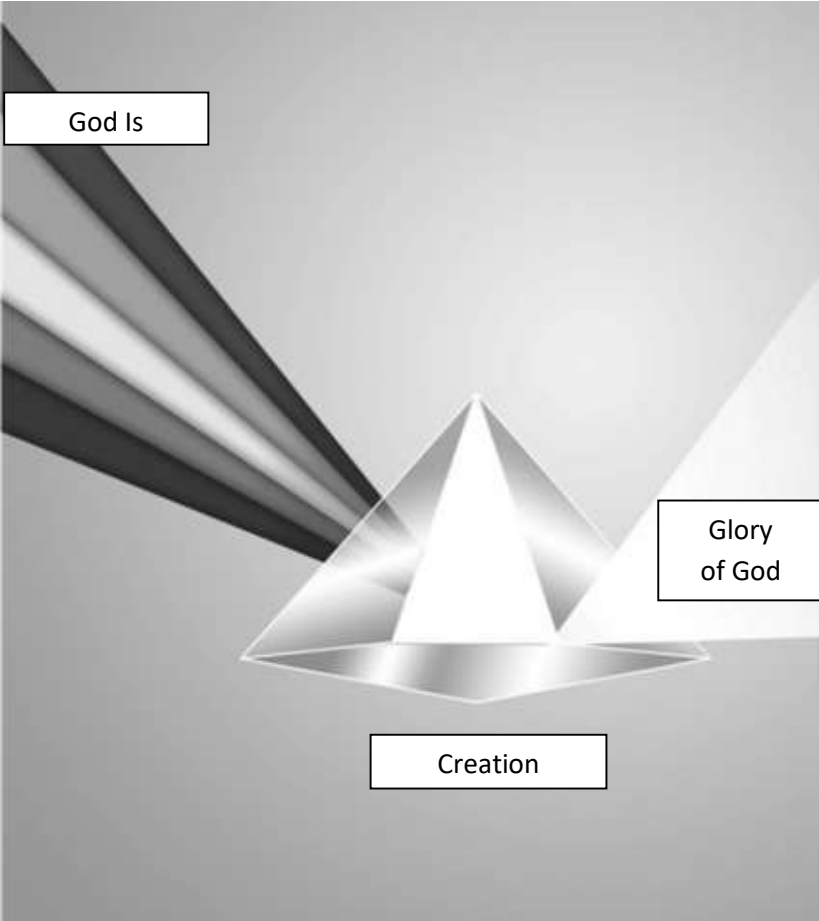
1. Like Psalm 19, Psalm 27 is a psalm of David. David seeks one thing from God. He asked the Lord for one request, “*that I may dwell in the house of the LORD...to behold the beauty of the Lord.*” Similar to Moses when he asked to see God’s glory on Mount Sinai, David wants to see the beauty of the Lord. And this request goes beyond a brief encounter. David wants to dwell there “*all the days of his life.*” He also meditates, letting his mind contemplate the beauty of the LORD. This was the priority for David. Of all the requests that might come from the King of Israel, David asked God for this one thing. What priority does the beauty of God play in your life? Does your life reflect a desire to be in His presence?

2. David wanted to be in God's presence. This was Anselm's invitation as well. "Come now and seek after God." In seeking after God we will discover His true nature. God is gracious, kind, patient, powerful, merciful, loving and strong. What attributes of God's character and beauty will be part of your meditation today? Pray with the words of Saint Anselm on your heart. "O Lord my God, when and how may I seek You."

God Is

Glory
of God

Creation



Chapter 3

The Glory of the God Who Is

“In the beginning God...” Genesis 1:1

I love summer, with its long days, family vacations, the joys of liberation from homework, summer camps and watermelon. There is such beauty in the changes in the seasons, just one of many aspects of the variety of life we see around us every day. Summer folds into the beauty of fall with its changing leaves and cooler days. The beauty of winter and the explosion of new life in the spring follow in this annual march through the diversity and changes of life. The evidence for God’s existence emerges out of such simple observations. Genesis 1:14 says, *“Then God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years.’”* Only an infinite, Creator could dream of sunny days and the friendships shared over a slice of watermelon. The immense beauty of the earth, the unspeakable grandeur of the universe and the intricate building blocks of life call us to contemplate life’s most basic truths. As David wrote in Psalm 19:1, *“The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.”*

A recent movie, *Expelled*, starring Ben Stein, identifies the battle within academia over the question of origins. At issue, if we are simply cosmic accidents how is meaning ascribed? Does morality matter? Does morality even exist? Who determines the worth of a person? Is the joy of summer a figment of our imagination or the purposeful design of a Creator who cares about us? The pressing question of how inert substances in the universe suddenly took on life propels the mind to either a) contemplate an infinitely powerful Creator or b) to embrace the unthinkable, that inert, unthinking matter “decided” to make something radically different than itself. In terms of faith it takes a tremendous amount of faith to believe the

unfathomable thought that unthinking matter evolved into matter with a mind. Those who hold to the random, deterministic view of life claim that earth and its inhabitants live a charmed life. We are just plain lucky. Against incredible odds we find ourselves as a celestial anomaly. The perfect solar system, with the perfect star and the perfect planet to sustain life precedes the most incredible coincidences of inorganic chemicals suddenly, inexplicable, taking on cell structure and coming to life.

Even more amazing is that this very “simple” first cell began to progress. Against all the laws of physics, while all the rest of the universe moves consistently toward greater chaos (as evidenced by my kids’ rooms), this single cell shed all of these laws and “decided” to make greater life by producing higher forms of cellular existence. This first, random cell must have been quite a special cell to buck all the laws that we now know govern the universe. There are advantages to ignorance. For this brave little cell, who’s very existence violates all the rules that modern scientists articulate, in ignorance took up the cause to do the impossible, create life out of non-life. Not just any life, but all the life we see today, plants, fish, birds, mammals and people, all of this from one cosmic accident. I would love to meet this cell who accomplished so much. I assume scientists possess gratitude for this little cell. What this cell did, in a completely inert world, was to accomplish what scientists cannot do even today in a laboratory with pristine equipment, perfect environments, all the necessary building blocks, and the knowledge to assemble it in proper order. One unintelligible collection of molecules developed into life and produced all of life. Something that not one scientist has yet to reproduce, the making of a single living cell from scratch.

From *The Case for a Creator*, Lee Strobel notes that “we are, by astronomical standards, a pampered, cosseted, cherished group of creatures; our Darwinian claim to have done it all ourselves is as ridiculous and as charming as a baby’s brave efforts to stand on its

own feet and refuse his mother's hand. If the universe had not been made with the most exacting precision we could never have come into existence. These circumstances indicate the universe was created for man to live in." Juxtaposing the changing times and changing seasons with the beauty and grandeur of Christ Himself, the Creator of all things, John wrote in John 1:2-3 that "*All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.*" Christ brought the universe into being. The exacting precision resident in the universe comes from His perfections. For those who claim there isn't sufficient evidence for God's existence, John says that in Christ was life and that this life was the Light of men. Life itself speaks to the creative power of Christ and calls all people to find their hope in Him. Darwinists worship the impersonal, first cell that came into and out of existence in the blink of an eye. According to Hebrews 12:8, we worship "*Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.*" The seasons change. Christ is immutable. Time passes. Christ is eternal. We cannot make one living cell. Christ created all that there is. As we celebrate all the joys of summer, the beauty of fall, the reflective nature of winter and new life in the spring, may all of our celebrations be a reflection of worship of the God who is. He is the One who never changes.

With all the beauty in the world, beauty that points to a Designer, why do atheists spend the effort to undermine divine attribution? Why would individuals invest so much of their lives torpedoing any manifestation of hope possessed by faith based people?

The Hope Against Annihilation

There is an agenda and it is writ large in culture, academia, and media. Have you heard? They found the missing link. At least that is what "scientists" are telling us. On Tuesday, May 19, 2009, a red letter day in the inquiry of Darwinism, a group of scientists

released their findings from two years of study. The hype surrounding this was incredible. The headlines were awash with great expectation. So much so, that I was expecting the fossilized remains of a monkey smoking a cigar or playing cards or driving a car. One would expect that the average viewer would be able to look at it and say, “Well, there’s the proof that humans are just monkeys with more sophisticated toys.” Most remarkably, the primary claim of the article, “Scientists Unveil Missing Link in Evolution” is exceedingly deceptive. For 200 years Darwinian evolution used the phrase “missing link” to identifying the hypothetical creature (for lack of a better term) that connected monkeys with people - a monkey with clearly human features or a human with clearly monkey features. Incredibly, despite the hype, this find is nothing of the sort. The missing link in this fossil does not show any connection between humans and primates. The scientists involved do not even claim it shows any link between humans and primates. The supposed “missing link” in this fossil record shows a connection between monkeys with tails and monkeys without tails. There is nothing human about the creature. There is something monkey like in the fossil and some features that are similar to other mammals. That’s it and nothing more.

Like the search for alien life where headlines blare, “we have found life on _____.” (Insert the name of your favourite moon around Jupiter or your favourite numbered planet in another solar system). Viewers are expecting an E.T. look alike. Suction cups, strange digitized language emanating from its alien mouth, eight legs and eight arms demonstrating the advancements of the type that Darwin had dreamed. Instead viewers are shown pictures of some cold, rocky planet and viewers are told that this uninhabited world has some of the same elements as earth, like the **potential** for water. To go from the potential for water on some uninhabited planet to the sophisticated life forms as humans are takes a tremendous leap. The gap is deceptively large. I have personally been sucked into these

“scientific discoveries” only to walk away shaking my head and wondering why they are wasting everyone’s time. Cosmologists really want there to be life on other planets just as much as anthropologists want evolved life on this planet. Some of this is understandable. If you invest significant years of your life to study and you find something even remotely interesting, it is highly likely you will speak about the discovery with unbridled enthusiasm. All this enthusiasm presented while everyone around you will be wondering why we should be excited. This is true in all areas of study. However, I fear in this case something more sinister is at work. There is something quite diabolical in this approach both in cosmological and anthropological pursuits.

The search for monkey fossils and the alien life are similarly motivated and now intertwined. Dr. Richard Dawkins claims that religion is a destructive force in the world and that a secular worldview (no God, no afterlife, etc.) is preferable. He also claims science has eliminated the God hypothesis through its unbiased, irrefutable evidence. However, Dawkins admits that the development of life, purely on the basis of chance, time and a long line of chemical reactions, is far fetched. Instead, he speculates that aliens brought the first seeds of life to planet earth. He alleges that aliens brought life here and that is how we got here, after millions of years of the most fortuitist events. He is one of several, very intelligent and very vocal scientists joining in the chorus that we should be thanking our lucky stars, literally, for being here. In particular, we should be thanking the particular star that housed our alien ancestors. These alien ancestors were quite remarkable. They travelled billions of miles over decades, centuries or millennia, simply to leave the first handful of cells. And then, inexplicable, went back home while leaving no other evidence of their incredible journey. All of this, in hope against hope, that these simple cells would accomplish their designed intent – life as we now know it. Evolution cannot sustain the idea that life simply evolved out of non-life. However, evolution combined with

science (or science fiction) has given us life as we know it today. The cosmologist seeks life on other planets to demonstrate how easy it is for life to evolve out of inert substances and the anthropologist seeks clear indicators from our planet to demonstrate how easy it is for life to evolve on its own. Of course, neither can explain how the material universe came into being in the first place. What is the origin of the universe which gives the potential for evolutionary and alien life forms?

Cosmologists and anthropologist link their studies in the hopes that aliens began the anthropological process. There is a common motive. Annihilationism is the ultimate aim. This is the sinister aspect of the investigation. Not the elimination of humanity, but the annihilation of God Himself. Motivated by a desire to demonstrate God's superfluous nature, these individuals commit themselves to a life of study. Why? Why go to such great efforts to eliminate God? It is not His creative power that bothers the cosmologist or anthropologist. It is His moral excellence.

Motives Identified

Jonathan Edwards says in his brilliant work *Man, God's Natural Enemy*. "God is not such a being as they would have. Though they are ignorant of God; yet from what they hear of him, and from what is manifest in the light of nature, they do not like Him. By his being endowed with such attributes as he is, they have an aversion to him. They hear God is an infinitely holy, pure, and righteous Being, and the do not like him because of this; They have no desire for such qualifications; They do not delight in them...They see no manner of beauty or loveliness, nor taste any sweetness in them. And on account of their distaste of these perfections, they dislike all his other attributes. They have greater aversion to him because he is omniscient and knows all things; and because his omniscience is a holy omniscience. They are not please that he is omnipotent, and can do whatever he pleases; because it is a holy omnipotence. They are

enemies even to his mercy, because it is a holy mercy. They do not like his immutability, because by this he never will be anything other than an infinitely holy God.”²⁷

If there is no God then scientific inquiry is strange activity. If there is no God then when we die we cease to exist. When you die, whatever knowledge you gained in this life will cease. Whatever activities dominated your day will cease to matter. No prodigious scientific inquiry can manufacture meaning. Ultimately, if there is no God, you do not matter now, because one day you will cease to exist. Here is how secular thinking attempts to create meaning. At funerals they say, “They will live on in our memories.” No, they won’t. They’re dead. They will continue to be dead whether we remember them or not. When the rest of us die, they will cease to exist in anyone’s memory. No amount of scientific inquiry can conjure up meaning in a meaningless world. Dream, remember, eulogize, immortalize in stone or plague; No amount of happy thoughts by your friends and family can conjure up a meaningful existence for you once you no longer exist. Funny how much faith it takes to create a meaningful life when you work really hard at eliminating any possible meaning to this life. Ironically, many pursue knowledge that, if true, would prove the pursuit of knowledge irrelevant.



²⁷Jonathan Edwards, vol. 2, 131.

Fundamental Attribute of Being

So, to my fellow believers, realize that all inquiry is biased. I am biased. I approach these questions with a Christian worldview. At the same time, if someone does not want God to be, then they will go to great lengths (even “missing links”) to prove their pointless point. In discussing the attributes of God, the most basic attribute is “is.” God is.²⁸ He is the Divine Being.

We are human doings, not human beings. Our life consists of what we do, not what we are. When we first meet someone we ask them questions about their life. “Where did you grow up?” “Where did you go to school?” “What do you do for a living?” These questions focus our attention on what we do. We are human doings. We come into existence. God simply is. The gulf between these two realities is infinite. Existence occurs because being has always been. God has always been. He will always be. With that, here is my biased suggestion. Trust the revelation that the Creator has given us. *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” “Male and female He created them.” “Let Us make man in our own*

²⁸From Stephen Charnock’s section on the immutability of God, “Immutability is a glory belonging to all the attributes of God. It is not a single perfection of the Divine nature, nor is it limited to particular aspects of God. Mercy and justice have their distinct objects and distinct acts; mercy is conversant about a penitent, justice about an obstinate sinner. In our notion and conception of the Divine perfections, his perfections are different: the wisdom of God is not his power, nor his power his holiness, but immutability is the center where they all unite. None of them will appear so glorious without this beam, this sun of immutability, which renders them highly excellent without the least shadow of imperfection. How cloudy would his blessedness be if it were changeable! How dim his wisdom, if it might be obscured! How feeble his power, if it were capable of languishing! How mercy would lose much of its luster, if it could change into wrath...he can no more be changeable in his essence than he can be unrighteous in his actions. God is a necessary Being; he is necessarily what he is, and therefore, is unchangeably what he is.”

image.” “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” “The heavens declare the glory of God.” “The fool has said in his heart ‘There is no God.’” “Lift up your eyes on high and see who created these stars.” “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.” “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” These words are much better, truer, higher and meaningful than a thousand dissertations on a 17 million year old fossil. God’s being is a much greater certainty than fictitious aliens from millions of years gone by. God’s reality is our certainty. God is!

Questions and Reflections

When God appears to Moses in the burning bush, their discussion progressed to the point where God gave Moses his task. God called Moses to go to Egypt and bring out the Israelite slaves out of bondage. Moses has some concerns. He feels too weak for the task. God addressed Moses' concerns by saying, *"I will be with you."* Then Moses is concerned Israel will not receive him. Exodus 3:13-14 records that *"Moses said to God, 'Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?'" God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM;' and He said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

The conversation between Moses and the Israelites must have gone something like this:

Moses: I have come to lead you out of bondage.

Israel: Who sent you?

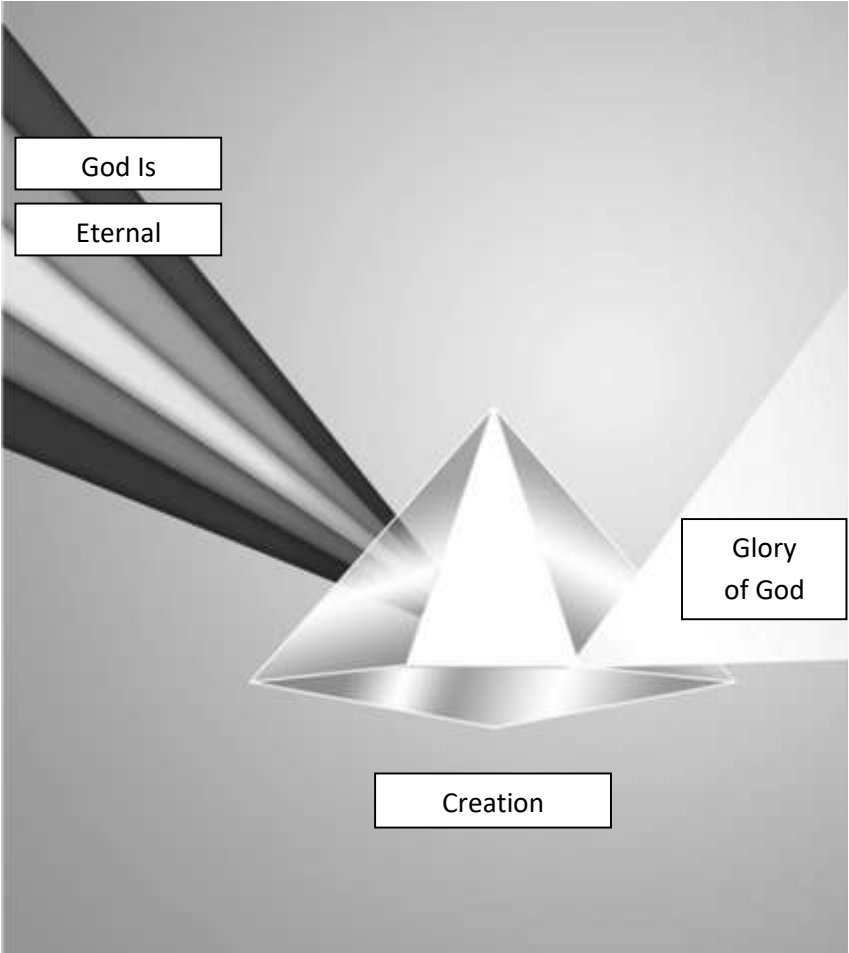
Moses: God sent me.

Israel: What is His name?

Moses: "I Am Who I Am."

God appealed to the most essential attribute of His divine nature. God is. He does not have a beginning. He has no end. His existence does not depend on us. This truth is communicated in God's name. In ancient Israel, names mattered. Names provided character markings for people and places. My name, Daniel, means "God is my judge." The city where Christ was born, Bethlehem, means "house of bread." "Bethel" means house of God. In providing Israel His most sacred name, God communicates something about His character. God's most essential attribute is His being. "I AM that I AM."

1. Reflect on the essential character of God. God is. We exist. We have a beginning and an ending. We cannot do anything for one moment without God sustaining us. Take a moment to praise the God who is. Praise Him who is the “I AM WHO I AM.” Praise Him for each breath of life.
2. On several occasions in the teaching ministry of Christ, He connected Himself with the God of the burning bush. Jesus said in John 14:6, “*I am the way, and the truth and the life.*” Jesus also tells His disciples in John 15:15, “*Apart from Me you can do nothing.*” Are there aspects of your life that you are living without a dependence on Christ?



God Is

Eternal

Glory
of God

Creation

Chapter 4

Time and the Glory of the Eternal God

“In the beginning God...” Genesis 1:1

I am constantly running late. My poor kids rush from the house every morning to shouts of, “We gotta go!” “You’re going to be late to school!” Running from the house, dropping the kids’ shoes and my keys, we scramble into the car and take the ten minute drive with the hope of making it before the 8:30 school bell. Ironically, driving in Dallas traffic would normally cause stress, but I look forward to the drive as it gives us time to collect ourselves, get shoes and socks on, and get the kids a quick breakfast. Usually I get them through the doors of the school just averting tardiness. There’s just never enough time.

Beyond the daily struggle - getting to work, arriving at school on time, and hurrying to church and to extra-curricular activities – the limited nature of time creates much bigger problems. It is not merely the limitedness of time within each day that creates stress in our lives. These micro issues pale in comparison to the passage of time on a macro scale. Being late to school seems rather insignificant compared to a new year or a new birthday or anniversary. We are getting older by the minute. The micro passage of time turns quickly into the macro as we get substantially older each year. My earliest memories as a child involve time with my parents when I was about five years old. I especially remember playing catch with my dad in the backyard. Now I am doing the same with my kids. At the park near our house, we take a bag of baseballs, our gloves, and bats. Playing catch and taking turns batting, my mind travels back to my own childhood. Some of my thoughts are nostalgic. Some haunt me. How did this happen? Where did my life go? Why can’t I go back to the days of summertime filled with baseball and swimming without a

care in the world? Time is an enemy of such desires. There is never enough time.

Ironically, sometimes in life it seems there is too much time. One fundamental and universal expression in childhood involves the desire to age more quickly. Parents often respond to their kids' requests with, "When you're older." Children want to be older so they can go to camp, so they can drive, so they can move out on their own, so they can get a job, so they can live without someone telling them what to do. Little do they know, there is always someone telling us what to do. Children want time to hurry, dreaming of being propelled into a better circumstance. What a liar time is? Just when we finally achieve all that hung just beyond our grasps as children, we then long for the simplicity of childhood (along with the health of childhood). We wish to go back in time. Time seems to move too slowly until we realize that it has moved too quickly. We slide continually toward greater morbidity and our eventual mortality. We are aging, as reflected in greater illness, increased body aches, and lack of energy. We are in the process of dying. We helplessly watch as our grandparents die, then aunts and uncles, then even our own parents, brothers and sisters. We helplessly watch as individual after individual goes over the precipice with death's circle moving closer to our own experience. It is inevitable. Like the school bell at 8:30 on Monday morning, hurry as we might, we cannot stop the bell. Take a different route, make several stops along the way, accomplish various tasks during the journey, we cannot stop the consistent and persistent tick of each second toward the bell. So it is with death. All the activity in the world will not slow its progress.

David says in Psalm 139:16, "*Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.*" God knew us before we were born. He knows when we will die. There is some comfort in those words. Comforting words, but there is a certainty to them. The days that were ordained for me means, there

are a certain number of days ordained by God for David and no more. When David died, I wonder if his family stood beside the grave and said to one another, “There is never enough time.” God already knows when your heart will begin to slow and eventually stop. Will your family also stand by the grave bemoaning the pace of time’s passing?

So, why did God create time? If God knows all things, He knew when He created time that time itself would function as our enemy – death’s tool to slowly grind our lives to an end. There is never enough time. **THERE IS NEVER ENOUGH TIME.** And I think that is the point. I think that is God’s point, to be precise. How does an eternal being disclose His eternity to created beings? If God’s purposes for His creation include disclosing the glories of His nature, then one of the most fundamental attributes of God is His eternity. God is eternal. What an incredible and unfathomable thought that He never had a beginning. We are temporal. He is eternal. We have beginnings and ends. He is without beginning and without end. Time is the anti-thesis to eternity. The creation of time – “in the beginning...” gives us the perspective necessary to contemplate His eternity.

When traveling with the kids they often ask, “How much longer?” (A much better question than the irritating alternative “Are we there yet?”) If I say, “30 more minutes” Michael responds with “Is that a long time?” For Michael, “30 minutes” is far too abstract. So I attempt to help him by giving him some perspective. Thirty minutes is the length of one of his favorite DVDs on the portable player. “Michael, 30 minutes will be over when the show you are watching is finished.” Concrete examples help with abstract principles. Were it not for time, humanity could only respond to God’s eternity with a question: “Is that a long time?”

God is eternal. He does not experience time in some sequential way. He simply is. He always is. He has always been. He will always be. He is fully present in eternity past, before the

foundation of the world. He is fully present at the creation. He is fully present at the crucifixion. He is fully present as I type these words. He is fully present as you read these words. He is fully and completely God at each and every place and point of human history. He is not bound by time. With His eternal nature, in comes our perspective. We begin to comprehend the depths of God's eternity when we consider our limitations. Our limits illustrate His infinitude. The Scripture says in Psalm 90:2, *"Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."* Psalm 90 presents quite a contrast with Psalm 139. Our days are numbered. Unlike our days, the time for God's being is from and to everlasting. He has no limit in either direction, no boundary either in the past or in the future. We are always limited by time's constraints. We are limited in the past by our date of birth and we are limited in the future by the date of our death. For God, there is never so much time as to be enough time to limit Him. A 24 hour day does not limit God. A million years bears no limits on God. For us, there is never enough time. For God, there is never too much time.²⁹

²⁹From Stephen Charnock's section on the eternity of God, "The eternity of God is the foundation of the stability of the covenant, the great comfort of a Christian. The design of God in Scripture is, to set forth his dealing with us in the way of a covenant...His covenant can have no foundation, but in his duration before and after the world: and Moses here mentions his eternity, not only with respect to the essence of God, but to his providence; as he is the dwelling place of his people in all generations...if he had a beginning, he might have an end, and so all our happiness, hope and being would expire with him...Though we cannot comprehend eternity, yet we may comprehend that there is an eternity; as, though we cannot comprehend the essence of God what he is, yet we may comprehend that he is; we may understand the notion of his existence, though we cannot understand the infiniteness of his nature; yet we may better understand eternity than infiniteness; we can better conceive a time with the addition of numberless days and years, than imagine a Being without bounds." 279



Lessons from time

This is not a purely philosophical discussion, but intensely practical and eternally helpful. So what do we learn from God's creation of time? First, we cannot squander what we have been given. This is true of our financial resources. It is true of our gifts. It is especially true of our time. Paul exhorts the church at Ephesus in Ephesians 5:15-16, *"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil."* We must make the most of our time. Every minute is a precious commodity. We are to use our time for the glory of God. Time spent ignoring the grandeur of God is lost forever. Time spent pursuing God and His glory is never wasted.

Second, the passage of time must make us continually aware of our fragility. We are moving toward a definite end. James 4:14 says, *"Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away."* We are here for a moment. This moment is especially short in light of eternity. When we are young time seems to crawl. As we

grow older and have children of our own we want time to slow down. When we look into the eyes of our growing children we realize that our lives are but a moment in time.

Third, something deep within us screams out that this is not the intent of the original design. We know that this life cannot be the final chapter to the story. Time passes, constantly changing. We say our goodbyes. We watch the effects of illness and death. We weep at funerals. All of these cry out, "There is something wrong here! There must be something more!" The writer of Ecclesiastes says it this way in Ecclesiastes 3:11, "*He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.*" God places the desire for eternity within our hearts. We long to understand eternity and to experience it. The writer of Ecclesiastes notes our inability to comprehend this, as we are incapable of ascertaining all that God has done from the beginning of creation to the end of time. We desire something more, something eternal. We want to experience this original design, a life without end.³⁰

Fourth, time is the antithesis for the eternal. God's eternality is best understood in light of our temporal status. Isaiah 40:28 says, "*Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired.*" Time is God's prism through which we can see His eternality. Time is our anti-thesis for eternality. One of the best ways to understand difficult concepts comes through examples of opposites. I

³⁰Alister McGrath states in his book, *The Unknown God*, "One of the reasons why death is so distressing is that it separates us from those we love. It takes most of a lifetime to get to know someone fully. To have that person taken away from us leaves a void which is difficult to fill. Yet to love God, and to be loved by God, is something which nothing can destroy or remove. Even death itself merely casts aside whatever final barriers there may be to coming to God fully and totally." 112.

am constantly running late. God is ever-present at every point in time and beyond time. I am constantly aging. God never changes. I am constantly dying. God never dies. I contemplate the inevitable ending of this life. God has no ending or beginning. He is the ultimate reality with whom we must deal. For us, there is never enough time and that is the point. For us, there is never enough time so that we will understand there is always enough God.

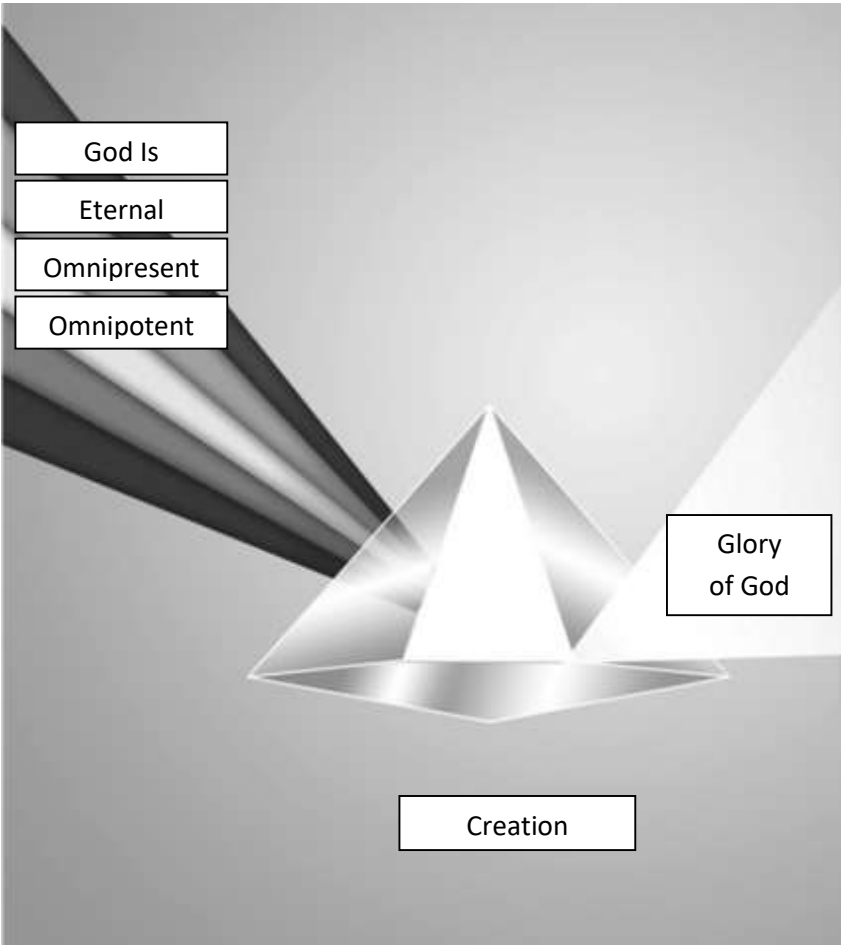
Questions and Reflections

“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”

1. Paul wants us to be careful in the way we live our lives, making the most of our time. There are many distracting activities that draw our attention away from God and His causes. There are many beneficial activities that draw us close to God and put us in the middle of His purposes. What will you do with your day? How will you spend your time this week? Will the activities of your life reflect wisdom or foolishness?

“Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.”
“And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.”

2. We will all die and stand before God’s judgment. In light of our momentary life, are you prepared for death? Are you prepared for the reality of your encounter with God when your time comes to an end? Don’t wait too long to answer this eternally and infinitely important question. God knows the number of your days. Your number could be up today!



Chapter 5

Space and the Glory of the Omnipresent God

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1

Standing at the trailhead with my 6 year old son, I concluded that it would be virtually impossible to make the ascent to my favorite place on the planet. Not that this hike in Rocky Mountain Park is particularly difficult. It is not a technical climb. However, three miles there and three miles back with a 1,000 foot altitude change challenges adults, let alone those with shorter strides. Giving me some measure of hope, the day prior we had made it to Emerald Lake – a 3 mile hike. This was different – narrower trail, higher climb and twice the mileage. But I love “The Loch” in Rocky Mountain National Park. Due to the climb, the crowds dissipate quickly as the trail moves deeper into the wilderness. There is a mountain river that gives a constant roar in the background for the entire trip while at times appearing in dramatic waterfalls along the trail. The faithful traveler receives a real treat at the destination – one of the most beautiful mountain lakes with glaciers and rock formations reflecting in mesmerizing semblance to the real thing, reminding me of the saying, “The greatest moments in life are the ones that make us feel the most insignificant.” We made it. However, I don’t know if the boys were as impressed. They spent an hour chasing a chipmunk, dipping their feet in the exceedingly cold waters and skipping rocks. It is funny how overwhelming the sight was for Kimberly and me, and how underwhelming for my kids.

My aim through this chapter is to prevent us from arriving disinterested at the destination of God’s greatness and our own smallness. As a guard against being underwhelmed in the presence of majesty, we must focus our minds on the basic questions of the universe and its relationship to God. “Who, what, where, when, how

and why” are the fundamental questions every reporter must ask when investigating a story. Genesis 1:1 explicitly provides us with “who?” – God, “what?” – created, “when?” – in the beginning, and “where?” – the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:3 provides answers to “how?” – *“And God said...”* God created by speaking the universe into existence. The one question that remains, “why?” outrivals the others in difficulty.

Though it is impossible to unfold all of the ramifications, we must explore one aspect of why God created a physical universe. First, we need to recast the question in order to accentuate the problem. Why would God create a physical universe? In Jesus’ discussion with the woman at the well, He states in John 4:24 that, *“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.”* If God is spirit, then why does a spiritual being create physical space? I assume that “God is spirit” means the opposite is true, “God is not material.” I also assume that creation brings material items into existence. In other words, prior to the creation God is, but there is nothing else. There was nothing material prior to creation because God is spirit. Prior to creation God is the sole reality. So when the creation came into existence then the material reality began. Why the sudden change? (Ignore the incredible difficulties in my question. I know, “sudden” doesn’t make sense before there is time and “change” doesn’t make sense in reference to immutable God.) There was nothing physical and then all things physical. God is the One who brought this about. Why does He do this?

Adding perplexity to this question, consider the continual restrictions on human behavior that come from living in the physical realm. God makes the world and then gives extensive prohibitions against idolatry, stealing, adultery and murder. All of these are predicated on a physical universe. Romans chapter 1, verses 23 declares that humanity has replaced the worship of the true God with the worship of idols. We trade the glory of the invisible, immaterial

God “*for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.*” In that same chapter Paul describes humanity engulfed in sexual immorality and other forms of sin that involve the misuse of the physical world. If God is omniscient, why did He place humanity in a physical universe with all the pitfalls and struggles that would certainly follow? Why does He create a physical universe and then prohibit many aspects of our behavior associated with the physical universe?

The problem expands when we contemplate the immensity of His creation. Not only does God create a physical universe even though “God is spirit,” He creates a really, really big universe. Then, in a surprising turn, He places His most choice creation as tiny creatures living on a tiny speck in the vastness of His creation. The earth is tiny and we are tinier still. By comparison, the earth is like a grain of salt placed in the new Cowboys’ stadium. And there are billions of galaxies. So imagine billions of stadiums all stacked on top of each other. In one of these billions of stadiums there is one grain of salt. That is the earth in relation to the universe. Then the builder of all those billions of stadiums tells you that the most prized object in his possession sits microscopically on the grain of salt. God creates a physical universe and it is really, really big and we are really, really tiny. Yet, on this smallest of planets He has placed His choicest creation – people made in His image.³¹

³¹In Stephen Charnock’s section on the goodness of God he writes, “The goodness of God appears in the conveniences he provided for and gave to man. As God gave him a being morally perfect in regard of righteousness, so he gave him a being naturally perfect in regard of delightful conveniences, which was the fruit of excellent goodness; since there was no quality in man, to invite God to provide him so rich a world, nor to bestow upon him so attractive a being. The world was made for man. Since angels have not need of anything in this world, and are above the conveniences of earth and air, it will follow, that man, being the noblest creature on the earth, was the more immediate end of the visible creation.



Lessons from space

Why? Why create a massive physical universe? One reason radiates out from God's revelatory nature. God constantly reveals His attributes through His creation. If the creation functions as a medium through which God communicates His attributes, what do we learn from the physical universe? One approach to clarifying a thesis is to develop the antithesis. If I tell you that my nephew is tall, you will assume he is tall with reference to other people similar in age and

All things were made for man, who exceeds all the rest in dignity: as man was made for the honor of God, so the world was made of the support and delight of man...The empire God settled man in as his lieutenant over the works of his hands, when he gave him possession of paradise, is a clear manifestation of it: God put all things under his feet, and gave him dominion over the rest of the creatures ...God crowned the earth with his goodness to gratify man; gave man a right to serve himself of the delightful creatures he had provided; and after man had forfeited all by sin, and God had washed again the creature in the deluge, he renews the creation, and delivers it again into the hand of man." 248-250.

gender. However, the thesis that my nephew is tall comes crashing down if he were to stand in the midst of a professional basketball team. He is tall, but not as tall as many in the NBA. My thesis, that my nephew is tall, becomes more difficult to sustain if we travel to downtown Dallas and compare him to the skyscrapers. The skyscraper is tall compared to my nephew. Now expand this to the size of the earth, the distance to the moon, the size of the solar system, the distance across the galaxy and the size of my nephew when compared to the distance across the universe, he is infinitesimally small.

The old adage, “you can’t be in more than one place at a time” mocks our limitations in time and space. God is infinite, omnipresent, and ubiquitous. He is everywhere, all the time. There is no place in the universe where we can go and get away from Him. David asked in Psalm 139:7, “*Where can I flee from your presence?*” The implied and obvious answer is nowhere. There is no place we can go where God is absent. There are nearly infinite places you can go where I am not present. I am continually absent from everyplace in the universe other than my own personal 6 feet of it. God is continually and completely present everywhere in the universe. If you wish to get away from me (and many do), scant effort is needed. Infinite effort is insufficient to get away from God.

Nothing communicates God’s infinitude like our limitations. Even when we describe something that we consider big, we define its bigness by its limiting factors. My nephew is tall. He is 6’3”. We use the limitations of his tallness in describing how tall he is. A skyscraper is tall. It might be 400’ tall. Again, though that is much taller than I am, we describe the tallness of the skyscraper by what limits its height. It is 400’ tall and no taller. That is its limit. Everything has limits in the physical realm. God has no limits. He is infinite. So what do we learn from the physicality of the world.

First, the vastness of the physical universe speaks to the immensity of God and the extreme limitedness of humanity. God

uses the enormity of the physical realm to communicate how big He is and how small we are in comparison to Him. This must prompt dependence and humility toward Him. Isaiah 40:12 asks, *“Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and marked off the heavens by the span, and calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, and weighed the mountains in a balance and the hills in a pair of scales?”* No one I know is capable of measuring the heavens or holding all the waters of the earth in their hand, except God. God has a divine size ruler and can measure distances the way a geometry student measures the length of a line segment. That is Isaiah’s point. No one is like God. Only God is infinitely big. He made a big universe so that Isaiah (and others) can point out the magnitude of God’s infinitude compared to our finite nature.

Second, consider the vastness and beauty of the universe and the power of God that spoke it into being.³² This God has set His infinite affection on tiny people on a tiny planet in a tiny solar system. Isaiah 40:11, the verse just prior to the statements about God’s infinite nature, speaks to His tender love for people. *“Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs...”* The infinite Creator displays infinite kindness by acting as a gentle shepherd. The contrast is striking. God has set His affections on us, small in stature, but infinite in value because of His love for us.

³²From Charnock’s chapter On The Power of God, “When I have spoken all that I can of Divine power, when you have thought all that you can think of it, your souls will prompt you to conceive something more beyond what I have spoken, and what you have thought. His power shines in everything, and is beyond everything. There is infinitely more power lodged in his nature, not expressed to the world. The understanding of humans and angels fall short of the perception of the infiniteness of it. All that can be comprehended of it are but little fringes of it, a small portion. No man ever discoursed, or can, of God’s power, according to the magnificence of it. No creature can conceive it; God himself only comprehends it; God himself is only able to express it. Man’s power being limited, his line is too short to measure the incomprehensible omnipotence of God.” 10-11.

Third, from a very practical standpoint, there is no problem in my life too small or too big for God. The universe demonstrates His ability to handle trillions of issues both large and small simultaneously. He is able to deliver. He delivers in a way that brings Him the most glory and us the greatest joy. This question weighs on the mind of Isaiah. Is God big enough to handle my problems? *“Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and marked off the heavens by the span...”* God is big enough to handle my problems. He is so big that He can take a God sized ruler and measure the distance between the stars then No problem is too big for Him.

God is big enough, but does He care? Does God care about my problems? *“Like a shepherd He will tend His flock...”* He cares for us the way a shepherd watches over his sheep. He tends to our weaknesses. He cares about our trials.

God is strong enough and He cares, but does He know? Does God know about my problems? Isaiah goes on to say in the next two verses, *“Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has informed Him? With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him...knowledge and informed Him of the way of understanding?”* God does not need help figuring things out. He knows all things completely. He knows about your troubles. He knows when you lose your homework or lose your keys or lose your temper. He knows when you feel like you’re losing your mind. He knows. He cares and He is big enough to do something about your life’s challenges.

In the vastness of the heavenly expanse, the universe screams to us, “Trust my Maker. He loves you. He knows all things, including your difficulties today. He is big enough to help you and you are small enough to need Him.”³³

³³From Charnock’s chapter on God’s Omnipresence, “The infiniteness of God is a denial of limitation of being, so immensity or omnipresence is a denial of limitation of place: and when we say, God is *totus* in every place, we must understand it thus; that he is not everywhere by parts, as bodies are, as air and light are; He is everywhere, in his, i.e. his nature has no bounds; he is not tied to any place, as the creature is, who, when he is present in one place, is absent from another. As no place can be without God, so no place can compass and contain him.” 369.

“God is present beyond the world. He is within and above all places, though places should be infinite in number; as he was before and beyond all time, so he is above and beyond all place; being from eternity before any real time, he must also be without as well as within any real space; if God were only confined to the world, he would be no more infinite in his essence than the world is in quantity; as a moment cannot be conceived from eternity, wherein God was not in being, so a space cannot be conceived in the mind of man, wherein God is not present; he is not contained in the world nor in the heavens.” 375.

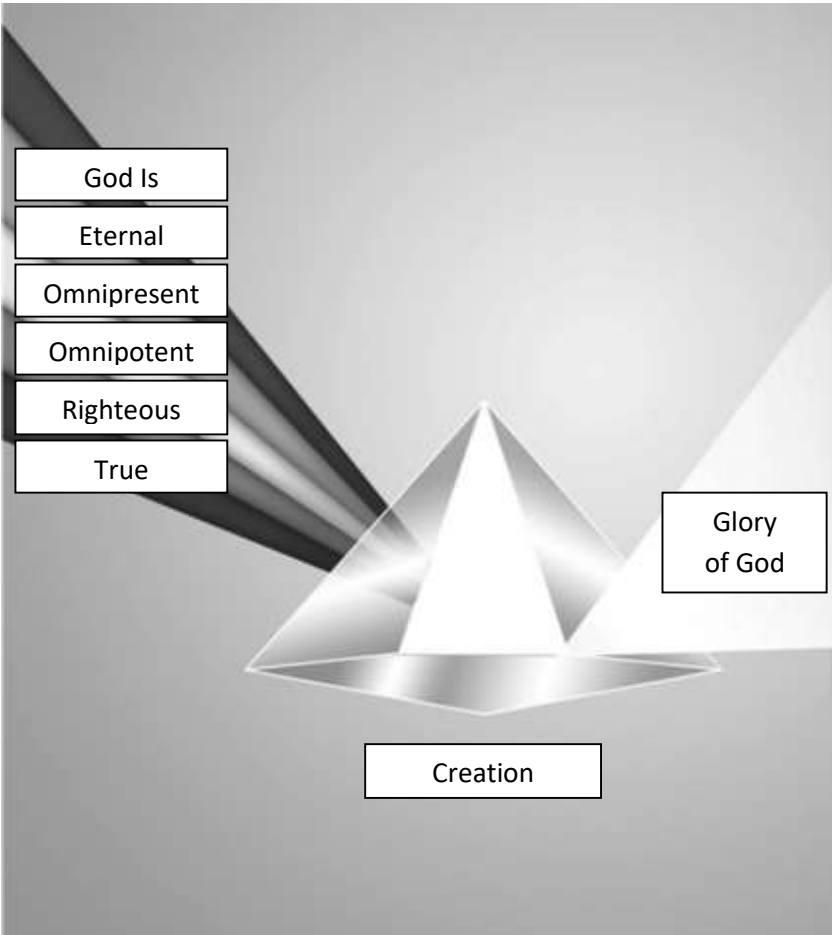
Questions and Reflections

In Isaiah 40:26 the prophet follows David's example from Psalm 19:1. The prophet engages in star gazing as a means of seeing the knowledge, power and presence of God. *"Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing."*

1. If the stars are completely under the sovereignty of God, then so are we. He knows each of them by name. He knows each of us by name. He leads them one by one. He leads us as well. If God has power, knowledge, and authority over the stars, then He has the same power in our lives. Is there anxiety in your life right now? That anxiety must meet the Scripture. Our anxious thoughts must engage the knowledge of the God who made us. He is everywhere present. He cares. He is big enough to take care of us. Will you, right now, turn those anxious thoughts over to the One who keeps perfect accounting of every star in the universe?

Isaiah 40:29-31 gives this encouragement to us. *"He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power...Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary."*

2. God gives strength to us. He strengthens us, if we wait for Him. Even those who are young will get tired. We all get weary physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Pray for God's strength, strength He willingly gives to those who acknowledge their need.



Chapter 6

Light and the Glory of the God of Truth and Righteousness

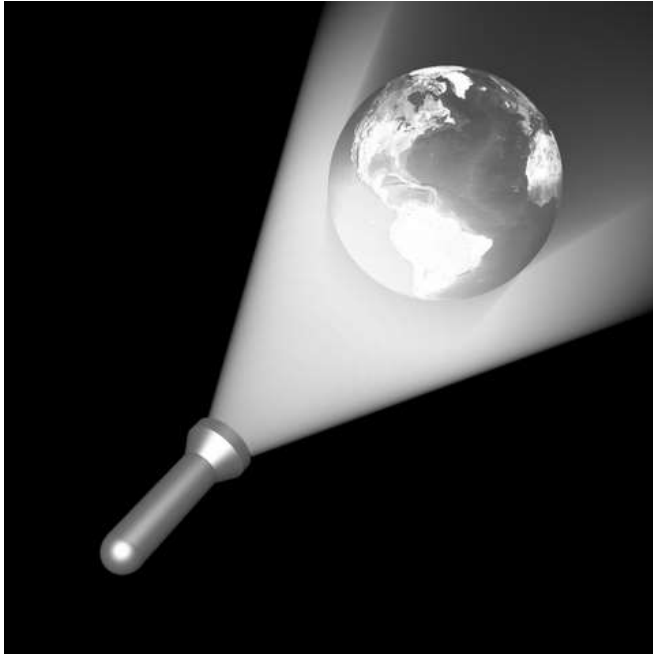
And God said, "Let there be light." Genesis 1:3

If I step on a toy in the middle of the night, the probability of its permanent removal from our home is directly proportional to the amount of pain inflicted. Foam swords and rubber snakes are OK while Thomas the Train and Legos are definitely OUT. In fact, prior to going to bed I make one final pass through the house to clear a path. All parents of young kids get into this habit. The middle of the night scenarios are all too familiar. Deep sleep is interrupted with screams for help due to childhood nightmares, illness, or the dog in their bed. It is so disorienting. First, I have to deal with the notion that the noise really exists and that it is not the machinations of REM-laced dreams. I commonly receive assistance during step one. Kim puts her foot in the small of my back and pushes me out of the bed, verification that the noise I heard comes from the real world. Second, now standing (with a sleepy tilt to the left) I navigate the narrowest of doorways. Our bedroom door is 32 inches wide during the daytime. In the middle of the night the doorway shrinks to a mere 16 inches, causing numerous abrasions on my arms, legs and head if I do not perfectly pass through it. (Either that or the tilt has pushed me just to the left of the actual doorway.) As I exit the bedroom, battered and bruised, I am now officially awake, and I'm in a bad mood.

The ultimate challenge awaits. I must navigate the most dangerous stretch of carpet known to humanity. The living room includes plenty of adult sponsored obstacles, like a coffee table, end tables and a couple of sofas. However, having been roused from my catatonic state, those objects are now faintly visible with the added benefit that these items usually remain stationary from day to day (usually!). The real risk for the blurry eyed traveler is the land minds supplied by my kids. With each step I realize I am mere moments

from paralyzing, tear inducing, knee buckling pain. My most feared and dreaded toy is the light saber. These Star Wars weapons receive low marks on three fronts: 1) sharp edges, 2) noisy and 3) they light up. One poor encounter can send me scrambling to the floor and trying to figure out how to turn the stupid thing off while suppressing the scream from the shooting pain in my foot. By the time I get to the kids' room I realize it will take me hours to calm down enough to get back to sleep. "Dad, Sam won't get out of my bed." Now the dog becomes a moving obstacle all the way back to my bed. He seems to know right where I am walking and goes to great effort to get there just before me. Why did God create darkness?

All of this drama could have been avoided. Genesis opens with that great theological statement, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" In the next verse, Genesis 1:2, darkness envelops the creation providing a cosmic showdown between the Creator and the dark. God intrudes on this malady with the first spoken words in the Bible, "*Let there be light.*" However, God does not eliminate darkness. Instead He separates light from darkness. The darkness remains. Its reality dictates much of our lives even today. Street lights, headlights, reading lights, stadium lights, florescent lights, flashlights, porch lights and on and on it goes. Why does God allow this thing to remain? That's an odd question. Darkness is not really a thing. Light possesses the attributes of both particles and waves. Light is. Light does. Darkness really describes the absence of light. Even at night, when it is dark, in reality it is just not as light as it is during the day. At night, there is some light, just not enough to function without some assistance. If we are in a place of utter darkness, then there is absolutely no light. Why does God create light and why does He leave the darkness in the creation?



All of creation exists to reflect the glory of God. The glory of God is the coalescence of all the attributes of God. Glory functions as a comprehensive term to describe all that God is and all that He does. The creation becomes the kaleidoscope through which God displays His individual attributes – a prism by which we can distinguish specific traits of the One who made us. If so, what does the existence of light tell us about God’s character? I John 1:5 says, *“God is light; In Him there is no darkness.”* Scripture contains other attributive statements like this. From John 4:24, *“God is spirit.”* I John 4:8 states that, *“God is love.”* From Psalm 34:8, *“God is good.”* In Deuteronomy 4:31, *“God is compassionate.”* II Chronicles 30:9 states that, *“God is gracious.”* From Psalm 93:4, *“God is mighty.”* “God is” also righteous, true, faithful, and holy. (Daniel 9:14, John 3:33, I Corinthians 1:9, Psalm 77:13) These are communicative attributes, attributes disclosed by God through His creation and through His acts in human history. As with these other statements, “God is light” communicates something about Him.

Lessons from Light

Throughout Scripture, light depicts two fundamental themes: truth and righteousness. God is light because everything He says is true. God is light because everything He does is right. With respect to humanity these two themes work as follows. First, for us light means possessing and living out the truth. Darkness indicates living or believing a lie. Second, light marks moral goodness while darkness illustrates moral evil.

In the case of truth, Isaiah 9:2 prophesies that when Christ comes *“the people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.”* Matthew 4:16 quotes this verse in reference to Christ. This prophecy predicts the teaching ministry of Christ in regions beyond Judea. Jesus says it this way, in John 12:46 *“I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.”* In the prologue to the Gospel of John, John describes Jesus as *“the true Light which...enlightens every man.”* Christ, as the Light, enlightens or brings truth to every person. Light describes the mind clearing work done by Christ when He comes into the world. The world is in darkness because it lacks truth. Christ intrudes on this darkness through His incarnation and ministry.

The Apostle Paul captures all of this language in his letter to the Corinthian church. In II Corinthians 4:6 he writes, *“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.”* Light shines in order to give knowledge. The light gives true knowledge about God and His glory. Christ Jesus, the Light of the Word, is the primary way the truth of the glory of God is revealed to humanity. Light and darkness represent truth and falsehood, respectively. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, the Light overcoming the darkness of falsehood. Just as God overcame the dominance of darkness in creation through the creation of light, so

too has God overcome the dominance of darkness in the world of falsehood through His Son.

Moving from believing truth to the arena of light and darkness as symbols of right and wrong, Isaiah gives serious caution to *“those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness.”* (Isaiah 5:20) John says, *“This is judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.”* (John 3:19) We love darkness (except when we are trying to make it through the house in the middle of the night). We are darkness lovers by nature because we are sinners by nature. Darkness equates to moral deeds of evil. We, by nature, love evil. However, because of our God given conscience we wish to hide the evil we love. The Bible describes this as *“deeds of darkness.”* We by nature are in darkness and God is by nature in the Light. We are unrighteous. God is righteous. We love evil. God loves the good.³⁴

This disparity in nature creates a huge problem for humanity. This is why we remain in the darkness. We cannot bear to come into the light. Just like when we wake our kids in the morning, when we turn on the light they grimace. It is painful to wake up that way. They are enjoying their darkness and their slumber. The light comes and we pull the sheet over our head to cover our eyes. The plea comes for more hours of darkness. “Please dada, turn off the light.” This is the picture of humanity with relation to God. We don’t want the light to come. We are enjoying our darkness.

³⁴In Charnock’s section on the goodness of God he writes, “God only is infinitely good. A boundless goodness that knows no limits, a goodness as infinite as his essence, not only good, but best; not only good, but goodness itself, the supreme inconceivable goodness. All things else are but little particles of God, small sparks from this immense flame, sips of goodness to this fountain. Nothing that is good by his influence can equal him who is good by himself: derived goodness can never equal primitive goodness.” 211.

This creates a challenge for individuals to become Christians. We do not want God to interrupt our slumber in the darkness. However, danger lurks there in the darkness. There is spiritual death where there is no light. When we are saved, God rescues *“us from the domain darkness.”* (Colossians 1:13) He takes darkness loving individuals and changes the disposition of our hearts. We loved darkness and now we love Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. Just as God overwhelms the dominance of darkness in the creation, He suddenly overwhelms the darkness of sin in the hearts of hell bound rebels. We receive a transfer. Our environment changes from the cold, darkened world of human depravity to the warm, lit world of grace.

The change should be dramatic. Like the difference in someone first waking up in the morning and someone outside on a sunny day. The sleeper is shocked by the light. The one already awake would be just as shocked if suddenly the sun went completely black. After God saves us, we are to be different. Believers are to live differently. Romans 13:12 says, *“Let us lay aside the deeds of darkness.”* The analogy in this verse presents us with a fashion statement. If my wife tells me that my jacket does not match my pants, I lay aside the jacket and pick up a new jacket that hopefully matches. It is the same when we become Christians. We set aside the old way of doing things. We lay aside the old ways of thinking, speaking and acting. We put on new garments, garments that reflect the thinking, speaking and acting of those now awake.

In I John, the apostle affirms the significance of moral purity when we encounter God. In order for us to be close to God we must imitate God in this attribute of light. We must maintain a holy, pure, chaste and righteous life in order to have an ongoing relationship with God. This is what John says in I John 1:6-7, *“God is light... If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth, but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the*

blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” Notice in this verse that both pictures of light and darkness are resident. If we walk in darkness (commit deeds of unrighteousness), we lie and do not practice truth. Living a life of sin is to live a life of deceit. Living a life of righteousness is to live a life of truthfulness. Here is truth. We cannot claim to have a closeness of relationship with God and carry out the evil that once controlled our lives.

There are many benefits to the existence of light and darkness. It is hard to see without light and hard to sleep without darkness. However, something more seems to be taking place in the creation account. From the beginning, good and evil, right and wrong, truth and lie, dominate the human story. Scripture continually uses light and darkness to describe this unfolding drama. When I walk through the most treacherous twenty feet in the world in the middle of the night, I am reminded of God’s righteousness and my inclination toward depravity. It helps me contemplate the extreme danger of living a moral life in the darkness. It helps me think on the dangers of living a lie. When the light comes on and allows us to see, we are reminded that when we walk in righteousness and truth we are close to God, for God is Light. There is no darkness in God. There is no unrighteousness in Him. There is no lie in Him. If I want to be close to Him, I must jettison all falsehood and unrighteousness. God made the light to help us comprehend these themes. God allowed darkness to remain so that we could see the darkness in our own hearts and seek His saving Light.

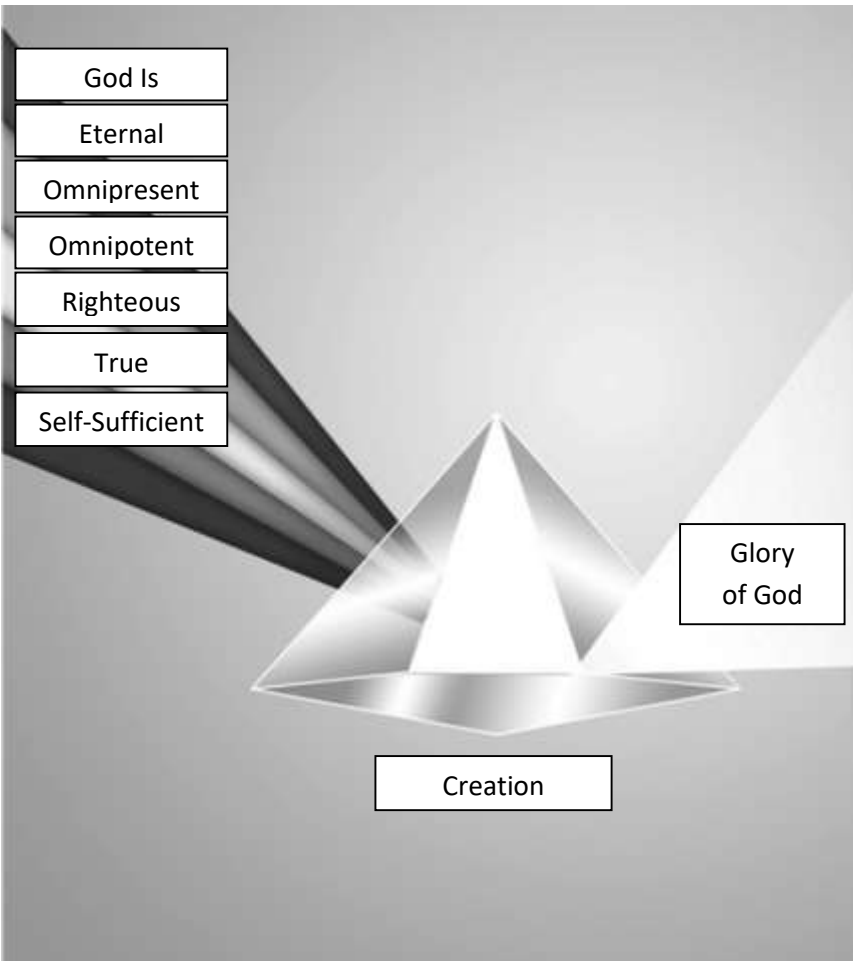
Questions and Reflections

Proverbs 4:19 says that *“The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.”*

1. Are there areas in your life that are blind spots? This proverb says that the wicked are in such deep darkness that when they stumble, they don't even know what tripped them. We are prone to fall into these types of traps. It begins with a thought and then becomes contemplation. We keep thinking about it. Then the thoughts turn to actions and the actions become a habit. In a matter of a few days or weeks, we are stuck in an area of darkness. The truth of God's word shines a light on our blind spots. An unwillingness to study God's word subjects an individual to trouble. An unwillingness to submit to God's word and to honor the Son of God, subjects us to extended defeats. Where are your blind spots? What areas in your life could become trouble? Are you currently stumbling in spiritual darkness?

John 8:12 says, *“Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.’”*

2. Christ still speaks to us today saying, *“I am the Light of the world.”* Walking with Christ, talking to Him daily, reading His word, following His example, teaching others about His goodness, provides protection from our natural tendencies. We tend toward darkness. He calls us back to the light. We need Him if we are to walk in the light as He Himself is in the light. We cannot walk with Him if our deeds are evil. We cannot avoid evil if we do not walk with Him. Are you walking with Him? Consider the last few days of your life. How much time have you spent in the spiritual discipline of knowing Christ? Have you prayed today? Have you read the Bible? Are you asking Christ to guide you?



Chapter 7

Life and the Glory of the Self-Sufficient God

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” Genesis 1:26

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. Genesis 2:7

“Dada, I can’t find my shoes.” That statement is heard almost daily in our house. Sometimes the panicked search comes just before baseball or football practice. Often times it is in the morning just before leaving for school. I usually respond by saying something like, “Have you asked the last person who wore them? Maybe they know where your shoes are.” The look on their face is priceless. However, I ask the question to get at the primary issue. I want my kids to be responsible with their stuff. As parents we long to have our kids become more and more independent. This process starts early with getting themselves dressed in the morning, feeding the pets, putting the dirty clothes in the proper place, putting up their dishes and doing their homework, and completing all of these tasks without much input from mom and dad. Though I love my children, my goal is to prepare them to leave the home and make their own life, hopefully walking with the Savior and honoring Him no matter what career or educational goals they pursue.

What is the purpose behind the drama in Genesis 1:26 and Genesis 2:7? Prior to the creation of Adam, the rest of creation comes by *fiat*. God simply speaks and atoms, molecules, cells, space, etc., all come into being. With Adam, he breathes life into his lungs. What is unique about humanity that God takes this approach to creating us? This verse is the first of many that demonstrate our dependence on God. Every breath we take comes from God. If you

are reading this chapter, you have taken in several lungs full of oxygen. Each breath comes from God's sustaining power. We are utterly and completely dependent upon God for all things. God made us. God brought life into us. Genesis 2:7 functions as a continual reminder that the initial act of providing life for humanity is the same as the ongoing and sustaining act of providing life for humanity. God *"breathed into his nostrils the breath of life"* and He has continued to do so. Hebrews 1:3 speaks of this attribute of God. Christ *"upholds all things by the word of His power."* He *"upholds all things"* means that every atom and molecule continue to do what they were created to do because God tells them to do it. In Colossians 1:16-17 we see this dual work of Christ, *"For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."* All things are made by Christ and He holds all things together.



Parents strive for independence in the lives of their children. However, God does not. God does not desire that His children learn independence. One of the attributes of God is His self-sufficiency. God's existence does not depend on anyone or anything. The

universe depends on God.³⁵ To understand God's self-sufficiency, God gave us an ongoing example. We depend on God. We need Him to breathe. We need Him for our hearts to beat. We need Him in order to be able to think and feel and reason. However, He does not need us. He is the only being who is independent. God never needs anyone to help Him find His shoes. God does not need anyone to breathe life into Him. He does not need me for His ability to reason and think and feel. Ironic, as a Christian parent I want my children to become more and more independent of me and more and more dependent on God. In encouraging their independence from I am simultaneously encouraging their dependence on God.

Creation exists to reflect the attributes of God. Our dependency puts God's self-sufficiency on display. Sometimes when we are teaching children we will say, "God made everything." Inevitably a child will ask the question, "Who made God?" I always respond with the following series of questions. "What if I told you that George made God? What would be your next question?" The kids will think for a minute and finally someone will say, "Who made George?" Then I say, "Sally made George, who then made God." Someone will then say, "Who made Sally?" This line of discussion could continue for as long as I could invent names and the kids could sustain their attention. The point being, someone must be self-sufficient in order for the universe to exist. The Bible is clear, God is

³⁵Stephen Charnock in his section on practical atheism writes, "Man would make himself the end of all creatures. In pride, using our tasks contrary to the end God has appointed: this is to dishonor God and it is diabolical. Man would make himself the end of God; (as opposed to God being the chief end of man) in loving God, because of some self-pleasing benefits given by him...in performing duties merely for a selfish interest...in calling upon God only in a time of necessity; in begging his assistance to our own projects after we have by our own craft, laid the plot; in impatience upon a refusal of our desires; in selfish aims we have in our duties: this is a vilifying of God, a dethroning of him." 175

the only self-sufficient, independent being in the universe and all things in the universe depend on His sustaining work.

Psalm 90:2-3 *“Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. You turn man back into dust.”* The temporary nature of the mountains speaks to God’s everlasting nature. Before the mountains came, God was. In fact, “from everlasting to everlasting” is the greatest expression the psalmist can construct to speak of God’s eternal existence and His self-sufficient nature. The contrasting example to God’s self-sufficiency in Psalm 90 is humanity’s end, a return to dust. This is the counter example to the one given in Genesis 2. In Genesis 2, Adam comes from the dust of the earth and is given breath. In Psalm 90, God’s self-sufficiency is demonstrated in that we die, turning back into dust and ceasing our lung activities, but He remains. Isaiah 40:7-8 says, *“The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.”* Even God’s Word is infinitely more permanent than we are.

Historically, Deists have presented God as a disinterested initiator of creation. A summary of this view may be that “God created the universe and went off to play golf.” The Deist view of God does not fit with the Biblical account of God on multiple fronts. They deny the work of God’s Son in the redemption of sinful humanity. Deists deny God’s miraculous work in the history of Israel and the church. However, the greatest failing of the Deist is the reduction of God’s involvement in creation. They hold that the universe was initiated by God and now ticks through time. This leads to one of the illustrations Deists employ to describe their view of God. Deists describe God as the master clock maker, building the clock of the universe, winding it up and turning it loose to function as He designed it. As interesting as this picture may be, it fails to approximate the incredible, continuous influence of God over

creation. The universe possesses no such self-sustaining design. The Bible does not present the creation in this way. If God were to remove His sustaining power for one nanosecond, the universe would instantaneously and completely cease to exist. It is not that God's limiting influence would have a slow, dull impact on the creation. Instead, if God withheld His power, in an instant the universe would go out of existence just as fast as it was spoken into existence.

God is the only being whose reason for being is self-contained. We exist to reflect His glory. By His glory I mean the collective attributes of God manifested in His creation. God's glory includes attributes like grace and mercy and love and wrath and eternity and omnipresence. The event of Genesis 2:7 was not an isolated event. The drama of that moment has continued down through the ages and has sustained you while you read this chapter. Can you feel it? Do you know that every breath comes from Him? He is the One to sustain us from moment to moment. He is the only One who is self-sufficient and totally independent. We cannot even find our shoes or our keys and He knows where every electron and proton resides in the universe because He is the One who sustains them. God is self-sufficient. Our dependence on Him for the most basic needs in life declares His self-sufficiency. May we act in a manner consistent with this reality, living like everything depends on Him. May we depend completely on God who sustains us.

Questions and Reflections

Psalm 100:3 says, *“Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.”*

1. The psalmist wants us to know something about the LORD. He only is God. As God, He only is able to create. He created us. We did not create ourselves. He not only creates, He sustains. *“We are the sheep of His pasture.”* God alone deserves credit for our life. Have you acknowledged God’s work in creating you and sustaining your life?

The following verse, Psalm 100:4 says, *“Enter His gates with thanksgiving, And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.”*

2. In acknowledging the role God plays in creating us and sustaining us, the proper response is thanksgiving. Gratitude for His provision protects our hearts from sin. When we are ungrateful, bitterness finds a home in our hearts. We become discontented. We harbor resentment and jealousy. We make decisions with that mindset. Thankfulness overcomes these struggles. Are you truly thankful today for what God has done in your life? Are you thankful for life? Are you thankful for God’s sustaining presence today?

- God Is
- Eternal
- Omnipresent
- Omnipotent
- Righteous
- True
- Self-Sufficient
- Powerful
- Wise
- Majestic



Glory
of God

Creation

Chapter 8

Open Your Eyes

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made...” Romans 1:20

A number of years back, Kim and I were able to take a vacation to England and France. Her cousin lived on a military base north of London. We took advantage of the free housing to see Paris, London and parts of the British countryside on the cheap. It was the trip of a lifetime. The historic sites like the Eiffel Tower, Buckingham Palace, Cambridge, Oxford and Westminster Abbey, along with great museums like the Louvre and the British Museum, provided unending intrigue on our journey. My favorite tourist destination was the Palace of Versailles just outside Paris. Constructed in the 1600s under the authority King Louis XIV, the architectural artistry and the unrivaled gardens provide for a full day of sightseeing. Nicknamed the Sun King, Louis XIV reigned for over 70 years. He thought so highly of himself that the Sun King would have a formal “rising” ceremony each day at 8:30 a.m. where enamored citizens clamored for the opportunity to observe the king getting out of bed in the morning. Everything about the King’s life and palace were done with the intent of bringing great fame to the king. He sought to bring glory to the monarchy through the use of the arts.

Guests of the king arrived at the palace and observed the incredible beauty of the massive esplanade at the front of this architectural masterpiece. In order to reach the main entrance, all comers passed by the grand, fifteen foot tall, statue of the king mounted on horseback. The statue still sits just in front of the Royal Courtyard. Passing between two stunning wings of the palace, with horse stables on the left and servant quarters on the right, guests

entered the stunning greeting room with marble staircases to the left and right. From there, the journey proceeded up the Ambassador's Staircase and through a series of hallways, the climax of which was the hall of mirrors. Nearly the length of a football field, mirrors covered the wall on the left and windows overlooked gardens to the right. The palace, park and gardens all perfectly aligned with the sun, giving the Hall of Mirrors an incredible glow at sunset. At the end of the hall, a final turn to the left brought the dazzled traveler toward to the King's Grand Apartment. All of the artwork along the path was intended to prepare the mind for the greatest treasure, the treasure of seeing the Sun King in person. Surely any visitor of the King would notice the greatness and splendor of these works. Surely the obvious demonstration of the greatness of the palace would point inexorably to the Sun King's greatness. Louis XIV viewed himself as the grandest artwork in the palace.

Ultimately, King Louis XIV was a megalomaniac. All this pursuit of his own glory through opulent use of the arts juxtaposed with his 5'4" stature and his death via gangrene betrayed the Sun King's delusions of grandeur. He is not glorious. He's dead. Despite claims in a recent article that "The Sun King shines again at Versailles. Hundreds of long-dispersed portraits, sculptures and tapestries celebrating Louis XIV have returned to Versailles, a former hunting lodge that the autocratic French monarch transformed as a reflection of his glory into a palace of unrivaled opulence."³⁶ His supposed glory now enshrined in antiques cannot bring him back. He is still dead and his temporary, megalomaniac inspired glory died with him. However, his ridiculous pursuit of personal glory provides us an example of the true demonstration of the King of King's true glory.

³⁶http://www.cleveland.com/arts/index.ssf/2009/10/new_versailles_exhibit_reflect.html by Jenny Barchfield

What Louis sought for himself but never could achieve, God had already accomplished. I feel certain that the Creator of the universe was unimpressed by the Sun King's palace. Construction on the Palace of Versailles went through four major phases and took decades to complete. As inspired as courtiers might have been in the palace, the work was a mere manmade attempt at grandeur, at times consuming the efforts of 15,000 workers. God made the universe by speaking it into existence. Even the smallest details of the creation trump old Louie's lifelong work. Hear what Jesus said with reference to another king and his grand royal court. "...*Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.*" (Matthew 6:28-29) All the toiling and spinning of kings cannot compare to the flowers God spoke into existence. Jesus calls us to open our eyes. Open your eyes and observe how the lilies of the field grow. Solomon was the Louis XIV of his day. Opulence and self-aggrandizement poured from the Jerusalem palace. The offspring of King David spent seven years building a temple for the worship of God and fourteen years constructing his own palace. Solomon wanted people to be impressed. A king dresses in robes of royalty to impress. Kings build fancy residences with a desire to bring glory to their reputation. In a far greater way, God dresses the lilies to bring glory to His name. Look at the flowers and their splendor. Humans cannot reproduce their splendor. Observe the lilies. See them as they were intended by their Creator. Observe them as a superior work to that of any human king. Lilies trump king's robes.

Creation exists in order that the universe would declare the greater glory of its Creator. Just as a walk through the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles prompted the glorification of the Sun King, God allows us to walk through His creation so that we would glorify our Creator. Seeing and enjoying the creation is a good thing. However, seeing and enjoying the creation for the purpose of glorifying the Creator is

the best thing. When we observe the creation with the Creator in mind, we will see His attributes on display.

That is what Paul says in Romans 1:20. *“His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen through what has been made.”* God’s eternal power and divine nature have been put on obvious display for all to see. It is obvious. It is clear. It is shown so prominently that no person can claim ignorance. According to Paul, everyone knows this truth. Everyone knows that God exists. His power and nature are known by everyone one on the planet. Despite the obvious demonstration of God’s attributes, Paul describes the reaction of humanity to God’s self-disclosure. The next verse says, *“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks.”* God reveals His character to us in His creation and we suppress that revelation. We suppress the information that proceeds from the clear manifestation of God’s attributes. It turns out that we don’t want the God of creation. God made us in His own image and we decide to return the favor. We have crafted a god in our own image, rejecting the clear manifestations of God’s glory and exchanging His true attributes for ones of our liking. God created us for His own purpose – to see and treasure the God who made us. Humanity becomes like a poor peasant in the days of Louis XIV walking the Hall of Mirrors while remaining unimpressed. God’s glory is on display by virtue of His creation reflecting His divine attributes.

Glory on Display

What attributes of God does the creation reflect? **Power, Might, Strength...** *Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing.* (Isaiah 40:26) God tells Israel to lift up their eyes. Take

note of this aspect of the creation and draw conclusions about the power of the God who made the stars.

Eternality... *Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.* (Psalm 90:2) The temporary nature of some of the most stable aspects of the creation – mountains, the earth, the universe – cause the psalmist to declare the eternity of God. From everlasting to everlasting, You are God, in contrast to these temporary things like mountains.

Wisdom... *O LORD, how many are Your works!*

In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your creatures. (Psalm 104:24) The creation demonstrates the wisdom and knowledge of God. Our eyes should see the incredible wisdom in the creation and know that the Creator behind the creation is infinitely wise.

Majesty, Splendor... *O LORD, our Lord,*

How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens! (Psalm 8:1) God has put on display His majesty and splendor. The heavens are splendid. God's majesty trumps the heavens.

Righteousness... *The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples have seen His glory.* (Psalm 97:6) The heavens declare the attribute of God's righteousness. The psalmist verifies what Paul claims in Romans, "*all the people have seen His glory.*"

If creation reveals all these attributes of God, why do some fail to see? The problem is not a lack of information. We have sufficient information about the nature of God. The problem is a heart condition. We know God is infinitely wise, infinitely righteous, infinitely majestic and infinitely powerful. We know that because God has made it known to us through His creation. He has done this so that we would see His works and glorify Him. What Louis the XIV sought for himself God had already accomplished. God has placed the artistic works of His hands all around us. He has clearly

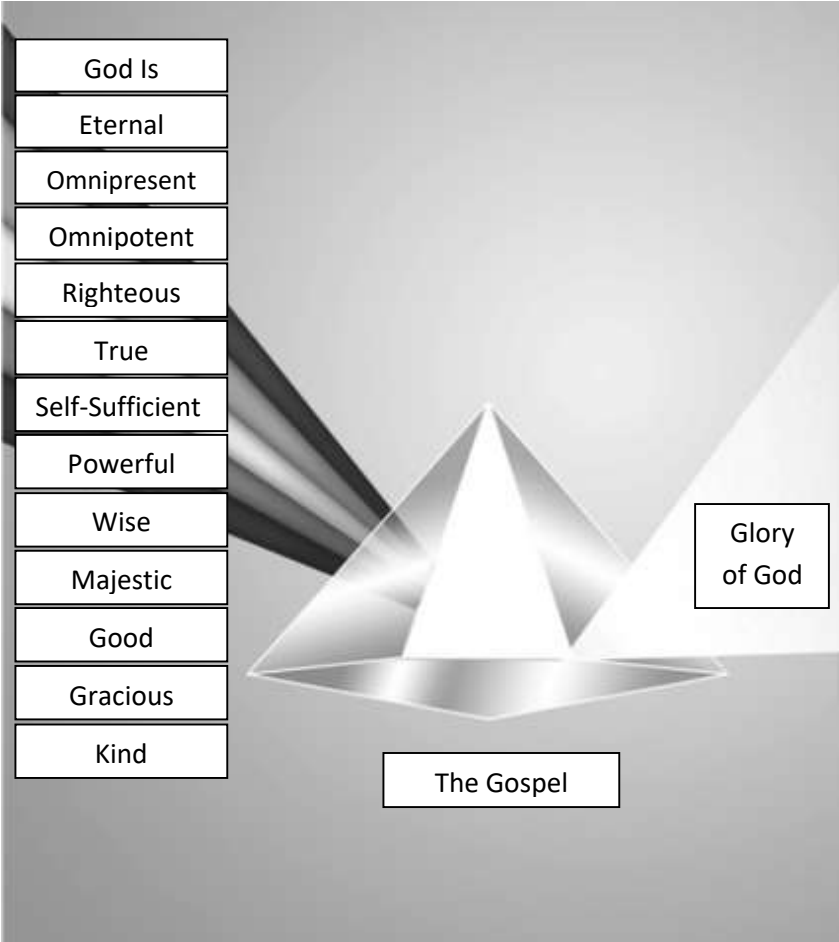
revealed who He is and what He is like. There is a call throughout scripture to open our eyes and see what God has done so that we may see His good works and glorify Him. **OPEN YOUR EYES AND SEE THE GLORY OF GOD!**



Questions and Reflections

In Deuteronomy 3:24 Moses told the nation of Israel about a conversation that he had with God. Moses pleaded with God, “*O Lord GOD, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours?*”

1. Moses reflected back on the times God demonstrated His character. God had liberated Israel from bondage. He brought them through the wilderness. He led them to the Jordan River and prepared them to enter the Promised Land. Moses responded to this incredible demonstration by God by saying, “*You have begun*” to demonstrate Your greatness and Your strength. God has provided greatly for you. Think back on some of the ways God has revealed His power in your life. Reflect on the way God’s wisdom has provided guidance for you. What attribute of God do you see most prominently manifested in your life right now?
2. There are so many things in this world that compete for our loyalty. Focusing our mind on the work of God can be challenging. It is difficult to see God working because we are distracted too easily. Like Moses, we need to catalogue all the ways God has intervened on our behalf. Pray for God to open your eyes to the wonder of His greatness and power.



Chapter 9

The Gospel and the Glory of God

“God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.”
Genesis 1:31

What is the Gospel? The word originates from the Greek, a noun with prefix. The root word means “word,” “message,” or “news.” The prefix means “good.” Combining the prefix with the root word results in the word “good news.” Gospel means good news or good message. The Gospel is the good news from God to humanity. Like a graduation announcement communicates good news, “He is finally graduating,” or “She finished medical school.” God announces good news to us. To the shepherds outside Bethlehem God announces through His angels, *“I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people.”* The gospel is good news, news that brings joy for all peoples. As Paul says in Romans 1:1, it is *“the Gospel of God.”* God is the author of the good news. It is His good news. He gives good news because He is good, one of His many attributes. As the psalmist says of God, *“How great is Your goodness.”* (Psalm 31:19) God is good and out of His goodness He brings good news to us. In the book of Genesis we read God’s own declaration of goodness. We hear the good news of creation, that *“God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.”* As with the gospel, the reason for this divine edict of goodness proceeds out of the nature of the God who issued the decree. God is good. Therefore His creation is also good and reflects His goodness.

Good news travels fast. Bad news travels faster. The Bible communicates news, both good and bad. Like the morning paper, many pieces of information fill its pages. We read messages about God and about humanity. We hear words concerning the nature of God and our relationship to Him. As much as the gospel belongs to

God and as much as the gospel brings joy to all people, there is also bad news that brings sorrow to all people. The Bible contains warnings about the reality of sin, death, judgment, and hell. The details of this bad news come in waves of examples of bad human behavior and divine judgment for rebellion.³⁷

- God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden after their rebellion against His law.
- Cain murders his brother Abel and becomes an outcast.
- Evil is so pervasive that God destroys almost every living creature through the flood of Noah's day.
- The tower of Babel reflects the arrogant rebellion by a unified humanity against God.
- Egyptians kill Jewish babies by tossing them into the Nile River and God brings judgment on them through the ten plagues.

³⁷In Charnock's section on the goodness of God he writes, "It is the disease of human nature, since its corruption, to hope for eternal life by the tenor of the covenant of works. Though this ruler's conscience was not thoroughly satisfied with what he had done, but imagined he might, for all that, fall short of eternal life. 'What shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?' ... This is natural to corrupted man. All people set too high a value upon their own services. Sinful creatures would attempt to make God a debtor to them, and be purchasers of good fortune: they would not have it given to them by God's sovereign bounty, but by an obligation of justice upon the value of their works. (They) thought God would treat men according to the merit of their services...men are so ready to make faith, as a work, the cause of our justification. Man foolishly thinks he has enough to set up himself after he has proved bankrupt, and lost all his estate. This imagination is born with us, and the best Christians may find some sparks of it in themselves, when there are springing up of joy in their hearts upon the more close performance of one duty than of another as if they had wiped off their scores and given God satisfaction for their former neglects. Eternal life is a gift, not by any obligation of right, but an abundance of goodness; it is owing, not to the dignity of our works, but the magnificent bounty of the Divine nature." 213.

- Moses commits murder, an act he will 40 years later etch in stone as one of the ten vilest sins.
- David commits adultery with the wife of an employee and then has the loyal employee murdered, breaking two of the Ten Commandments in one event.
- Judah and Israel are swept into the idolatry, even sacrificing their own kids to idols at times resulting in loss of land and blessing.

In this way the Bible does not read as a legal document or instructional manual. We see the bad news in illustrations of the consequence of sin, sin just like our own. We sin against God and against each other. We lie, steal, murder and commit adultery in our minds. We commit idolatry by loving this world more than we love the Creator of this world. The creation is good. God declared creation to be very good, but then humanity pollutes the creation with sin. We pollute the very good creation by violating God's standards for our behavior. Much like the sky line of a large metropolitan area where the morning smog hovers over the city skyline, sin hovers over all facets of creation. Traces of the architectural design of the downtown buildings are still visible. Through the smog we see the craftsmanship of these master designers and builders. However, the ugliness of human pollution morphs the beauty of the skyline. The buildings seem to choke under the thick haze.

When I worked in downtown Dallas, summer morning commutes revealed a horrific scene. On a cloudless Texas day, the brown cloud engulfing the downtown area made my heart sink. "We're breathing this." This is the picture of the spiritual condition of humanity. The hindrance to seeing the skyline illustrates the struggles in our spiritual life. The Master Designer placed beauty in an endless variety of structures both big and small. He placed them everywhere in nature. All of that beauty still pervades the world. However, there is something impeding the view. We are placed by God into the beauty of His creation, but the spiritual pollution of our sin obstructs our view of the glory of God. As with the skyline, sin

does not completely eliminate the design. We can still see God's craftsmanship. Humanity still observes the beauty of God as seen in flowers, mountains, trees, stars, etc. However, at times the ugliness of human rebellion so permeates our existence that we fail to see the glory of God in what He has made. God created the world for the sake of His glory, that is, God created the world with the purpose of displaying His attributes. Human sin clouds our ability to discern His beauty.

With the problem of smog, it is common to place the blame on others, specific industries or local business, as if they are the only culprits. Though blaming other commuters, I finally came to realize that I was part of the problem. The exhaust from my car was part of the smog. I realized that my commute each day was contributing to this unhealthy condition. Part of the haze over the city was mine. So it is with human sin. Like workers in a downtown area, we breathe the pollution of human sin all day long. It is not just that we live among a few sinful individuals that mess it up for the rest of us. We are all in this together. All humanity contributes to the spiritual smog that mutes the revelation of God's glory. We breathe this sinful death into our soul. As an asthmatic on an ozone day, we spend every day of our lives inhaling the pollution from our own souls and the pollution exhaled from the souls of our neighbors with the consequence of failing spiritual health. We pay the ultimate consequence of the spiritual fumes - death. Overwhelmed by our spiritual toxins, we can no longer see the skyline of God's glory on display.

This is bad news. The Bible tells us that God holds us accountable for our participation in the malaise that lingers over His creation. The infinite beauty of God requires humanity's unending worship of our Creator. We were created for the purpose of bringing glory to God, of accentuating all of His attributes. Not only do we fail to bring Him glory, our sin obstructs the view of His glory for others. Sin pits our own desires against God's intent of the creation.

Sin puts our desires against God's desires in a battle that we cannot win. In addition to the specific examples of human rebellion and subsequent consequences, the Bible provides theological language giving universal application to the laws of sin and death. Consider these statements.

"...There is no health in my bones because of my sin." Psalm 38:3

"I am full of anxiety because of my sin." Psalm 38:18

"...my sin is ever before me." Psalm 51:3

"...for his treachery...and his sin...he will die." Ezekiel 18:24

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

"...sin reigned in death..." Romans 5:21

"...sin resulting in death..." Romans 6:16

"For the wages of sin is death..." Romans 6:23

"The sting of death is sin..." I Corinthians 15:56

"But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin..." Galatians 3:22

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins..." Ephesians 2:1

"...when sin is accomplished it brings forth death." James 1:15

"If we say we have no sin we are deceiving ourselves..." I John 1:8

This is truly bad news. Notice the universality of these truths. All have sinned. All are dead in our sins. If we claim to be sinless, we are simply self-deceived. All sinners (all of us) face the consequence of sin which is death. Physical death provides us with a continual illustration of the impact of the pollution of our sin. Just as every orange pollution day in the DFW area functions to remind us of the reality of physical smog. So too, every funeral, hospital visit, illness and pain reminds us of the reality of physical death. Just as the morning commute into downtown reminds us of the reality of pollution hovering over our city, physical pain and suffering provides continual reminders of the reality of the spiritual pollution all around us. The physical reality of death points to a spiritual reality. We die physically because we are dead spiritually. The spiritual death precipitates the physical death. Physical death points to the reality of our spiritual death. We are dead spiritually because of sin. Our sin

dishonors the intent and purpose of creation. We were made to reflect the glory of God. Sin destroys that purpose leading us to the consequences for all those who wage war against their Creator, spiritual death.³⁸

Where is the good news? If all of us have sinned and fall short of God's glory and if we are all dead in our trespasses and sins, where is the hope? God is our hope. He intervenes on our behalf. He saves us from this hopeless, deadly and devastating condition. "The whole work of God in redemption is to undo the tragic effects of that foul revolt, and to bring us into right and eternal relationship with Himself. This requires that our sin be disposed of satisfactorily."³⁹ In other words, God must deal with our sinful pollution.

Unlike the architect of a downtown office building who is powerless over the smog that obstructs their design, God is not powerless over human sin. The good news is that God offers complete forgiveness of sin. He offers forgiveness by transferring the consequence of our sin to His Son, Jesus Christ. God makes Jesus to be sin for us. Jesus becomes sin in my place. He becomes a substitute for me. He bears my consequences for sin when He dies on the cross. The Master architect absorbs the sin of humanity in the act of Christ's death. Like a sponge, God soaks in the consequences of human sin, death, anxiety, pain, disappointment, disillusionment and then squeezes the contents of the sponge out on the cross. Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ receives the removal of sin and its

³⁸Stephen Charnock writes on the holiness of God, "God, having an infinite knowledge of himself, can only have an infinite love to himself, and, consequently, an infinite holiness without any defect; because he loves himself according to the vastness of his own amiableness, which no finite being can...God is so holy, that he cannot possibly approve of any evil done by another, but perfectly abhors it...He abhors it necessarily...He abhors it intensely...He abhors it universally...He abhors it perpetually." 118-120

³⁹A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*. (Christian Publications, Inc. 1982, 1993), 33.

consequences. By faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, by believing in His substitutionary death in my place and His resurrection from the dead, God will remove from me the ultimate spiritual consequences of my sin. God proves His work of sin removal by raising Jesus Christ from the dead and by raising us from the dead at the end of time. By faith in Jesus Christ, God restores my spiritual life to its original intent, the glorification of God.

What does the Bible say about the good news, the gospel?

Here are a few examples...

"...Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'" Mark 1:14-15

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..." Romans 1:16

"Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved..." I Corinthians 15:1-2

"For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ." Galatians 1:11-12

"...when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus." II Thessalonians 1:7-8

"For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God." I Peter 4:6

"For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" I Peter 4:17

From these verses we can draw some conclusions. The Gospel comes from God. It is His good news. Christ preached the

good news as He began His public ministry. He called on all to repent (turn from their sins) and believe in the gospel. Believing in the Gospel brings the power of God to bear on our lives and we are saved. By saved, the Bible means that spiritually dead individuals receive life by the work of God. Refusing to believe in the Gospel leaves an individual in a state of spiritual death and brings the judgment of God.

I Peter 4:5-6 says that all individuals will give an account before God. *“They will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.”* When you die, and you will die, you will stand before God. Each individual must give an account to God about his life. All individuals are sinners. Everyone has sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. All sin leads to death, therefore all sinners are spiritually dead and incapable of saving themselves. Then how do dead people receive life? If someone is dead, then salvation is impossibility. How do spiritually dead people come to life? The gospel is preached and the spiritually dead believe. Sin kills. Sin brings spiritual death and judgment. This is the reason for preaching the good news. The good news provides life according to God’s plan. The gospel is God’s remedy for sinful people. The good news that Jesus Christ died on the cross for the penalty of our sin provides the only cure for spiritual death. Without this cure, all people would be forever spiritually dead and would be destined to die physically forever. As with all medicine, the cure does not help those who refuse it. The cure must be received. Dead people can be cured through God’s provision of eternal medicine. There are no known medicines like this in the physical realm. No pharmaceuticals applied to a corpse will remedy their disease. Only God can bring life out of death. Only God can bring spiritual life to those who are spiritually dead. As the Great Physician, He provides freely to all who believe.

Proclaiming this good news functions as the spiritual cure for spiritual death. God works miraculously in spiritual dead people and brings life.

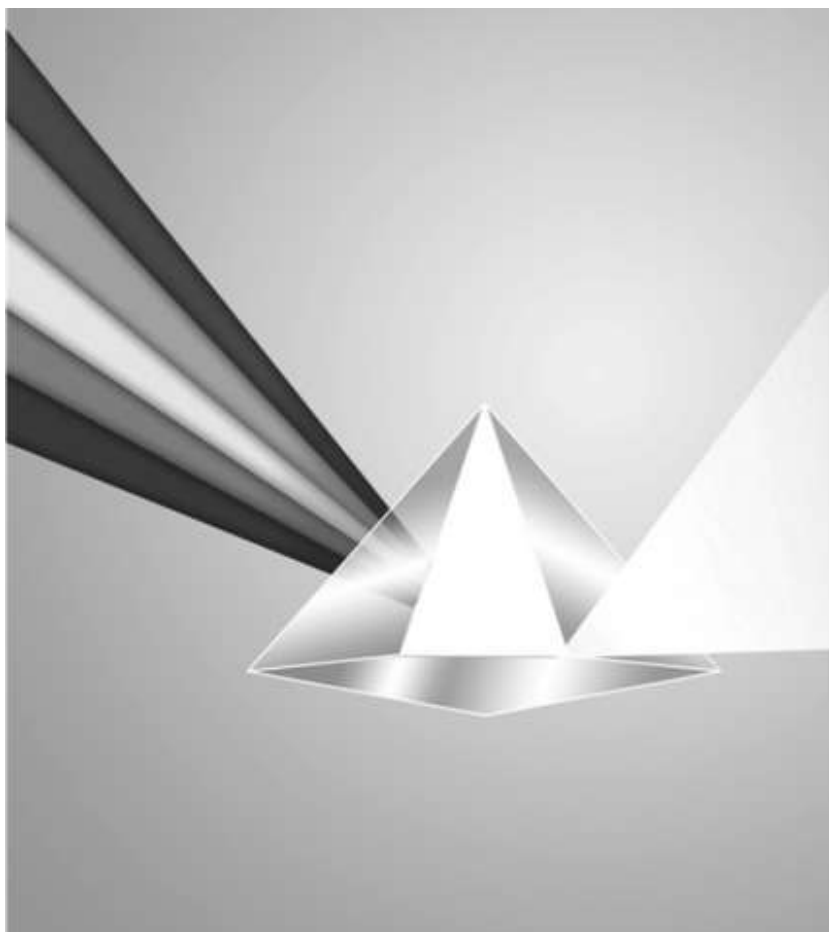
The gospel, this good news from God, must be proclaimed to all people in all nations. Keeping this good news to ourselves violates the desires and commands of Jesus. Jesus tells the disciples in Mark 16:15-16 *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”* The gospel, the good news that God forgives sinners and adopts them as His own children, must go into all the world. Believers proclaim this good news to the world with the intent that individuals who hear the good news will believe in the good news. This comes with a warning, those who refuse to believe in the good news proclaimed by these followers of Jesus shall be condemned.

This is the gospel. The good news is that God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. We were dead in our trespasses and sins. We died in our rebellion against God, and God uses our rebellion as a means to reflect His glory, glory demonstrated in His gift of grace to us. In fact, as much as creation functions as a prism through which we see the attributes of God, the greatest prism is the gospel. All of the attributes of God are reflected in the Gospel. The gospel reflects God’s eternal nature through which He provides eternal life to all who believe. The gospel reflects the righteousness of God in that He pours out justice on His Son on our behalf. The gospel reflects the power of God in that He overcomes the power of sin and death through the resurrection of Christ. The gospel reflects the goodness of God in that He grants good things to those who were once His enemies. The gospel reflects the kindness of God in that He does not take my sin into account, but rather transfers my sin to the account of His Son. This is truly good news!



Questions and Reflections

1. Have you believed in the Gospel? By this I mean have you put your hope, faith and life in the message that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the cross for your sins and that He rose again from the dead? This is the most important issue in your life. No other decision comes close to this one. This involves a commitment. Believing in the Gospel involves placing your life under the control of Jesus Christ. He becomes our Lord (boss, leader, commander). He becomes our treasure (most important, most valued, most loved). This is what the Bible means when it calls on us to believe in Jesus or to believe in the good news about Jesus. When we believe, we make Jesus our Lord and our treasure. This changes everything in our life. This changes the way we think and act. This changes what we do with our money and time. This belief in Christ changes what we do with our talents. All things in our lives fall under His authority. Have you believed in the Gospel?
2. If you have believed in the Gospel, are you now faithfully proclaiming this good news to others? What commitment will you make this week to share God's good news with someone you know?



Conclusion

Glory and the Prism of God

Psalm 145:5 On the glorious splendor of Your majesty and on Your wonderful works, I will meditate.

We have journeyed through the first two chapters of the Bible, often using the discussion to travel into other areas of Scripture. The intent was to focus our thinking on our purpose. We are made to know God. We are made to know Him in the fullness of His attributes. We were created for this end. God made us and all things to demonstrate His glory. For much of our life we ignore the purpose for which we were made. This failure is our own. Our sin distracts us from His purposes in our life. It is impossible to fix our eyes on the glory of the Creator when our eyes are filled with our own desires. Stephen Charnock's made an excellent point with regard to this. "An eye, taken up with the presence of one object, is not at leisure to be filled with another: he that looks intently upon the sun, shall have nothing for a while but the sun in his eye. Oppose every intruding thought and put to silence all that competes for our awe of his Majesty."⁴⁰

The psalmist says it this way, "...on Your wonderful works, I will meditate." Meditation fixes our mind on a particular thing. Meditations are the prevailing thoughts during our morning commute. They are the thoughts that dominate our mind when the lights go out and we struggle to fall asleep. Psalm 145 was written by David. Maybe we can imagine the shepherd David with the all night task of watching his sheep. What dominated his thinking? David reflected on the majestic character of God and on the wonder of God's works in human history. It may be that David's extensive time working the graveyard shift with his animals provided the perfect backdrop for

⁴⁰ Stephen Charnock, 404-405.

this psalm. Imagine David staring at the night sky. Unhindered by manmade lights, the human eye can see 100 million stars at night in the Milky Way. On a hill outside Bethlehem 3000 years ago, nothing prevented David from seeing the wondrous works of God. Nothing, other than the constant distraction of straying sheep, other shepherds, physical exhaustion, worries and anxieties, plans for the future, regrets from the past, and a host of other things that may have come across David's mind.

Even as I attempt to complete the final chapter for this book, I have been interrupted a dozen times. The phone rings, my kids coming in and out of my office, individuals with "quick" questions, staff members checking on some church business, emails, worries about the schedule for the rest of the week, plans for tomorrow, and the list goes on and on. We battle to have a few moments of focused thinking. We have to fight to get time and energy to focus our minds. Interestingly enough, if the task at hand is my favorite football team, I am fully enthralled. Surely God is worthy of greater attention than a college football game?

This book is about purpose. What is our purpose in life? Why are we here? Why is the creation here? We were made for the glory of God. That is why God created us. The glory of God is the coalescence of all the attributes of God and God's demonstration of those attributes in His work in creation and human history. When we see His grace, we are seeing one aspect of His glory. The grace of God points us back to the full panoply of His attributes. When we observe the power of God, God's power directs our thinking back to the God of power and thus to the whole collection of His attributes, namely His glory. This is why God created the universe. He created us and all things for His glory. All things point back to the nature of the God who made us. The greatest activity, the highest calling, the grandest task of our lives is focusing our minds on His glory. The creation provides us with a vision of the nature of God. God's creation is "more than meets the eye."



Appendix 1, Suggested Reading List

Apologetics

Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*. (Baker Books, 1996)

Alister McGrath, *The Unknown God*. (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999)

R. C. Sproul, *If there is a God, Why are there Atheists*. Also released under the title *The Psychology of Atheism*. (Bethany Fellowship, 1978)

Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*. (Zondervan, 1998)

Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith*. (Zondervan, 2000)

Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God?* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994)

Ravi Zacharias, *The End of Reason*. (Zondervan, 2008)

Ravi Zacharias, *A Shattered Visage*. (Baker Books, 1993)

Creation

R. C. Sproul, *Not a Chance*. (Baker Books, 1994)

Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*. (Zondervan, 2004)

Glory and the Attributes of God

Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 and 2.
(Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2000)

John Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory*. (Crossway Books, 1998)

R.C. Sproul, *The Character of God*. (Servant Publications, 2004)

R. C. Sproul, *The Glory of Christ*. (P & R Publishing, 2003)

The Gospel

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*. (HarperSanFrancisco, 2001)

John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity*. (IVP Books, 2007)

Appendix 2, Biblical Uses of the Term Glory

There are at least five uses of the term glory. First, the primary use describes an attribute of God. God is glorious. This is His nature. He bears the attribute of glory. Just as when we say a child is tall or short or cute, the child bears the attribute of tallness or shortness or cuteness. In the case of God, He is glorious. I Chronicles 16:23-25 says, “...Sing to the LORD, all the earth; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples. For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised.” God is glorious and great. These are attributes of God. In I Chronicles 29:10-11 “So David blessed the LORD in the sight of all the assembly; and David said, “Blessed are You, O LORD God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all.” In giving this blessing to Israel, David reminds them that God is great, powerful, majestic and glorious. Glory is one of several divine attributes ascribed to God by David. God is glorious. Though this is the primary function of the word in the Bible, there are other uses. All other uses of this term draw their etymological development from this primary use, an attribute of God. God is glorious. “As used of God, it is deemed particularly appropriate for describing His moral uniqueness and grandeur as Lord of the universe.”⁴¹

Second, “glory” refers to the place where God dwells. Glory functions as another word for heaven. For instance, Jesus on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:25-26 said to His traveling companions, “O foolish men ... Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these

⁴¹E.F. Harrison, “Glory” in The New International Encyclopedia of the Bible, 478.

things and to enter into His glory?” Glory is a place where Christ went. After the crucifixion and resurrection Christ entered into His glory. He ascended to heaven. In Hebrews 2:10 the Scripture says *“For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory...”* After entering into His glory, Jesus Christ will return. When He does, some day in the future, Christ will bring all believers to glory. Glory is a place, a place where Christ currently dwells and a place where all believers will one day dwell. Glory functions as a synonym for heaven. What links the attribute of God with heaven? God is glorious, and glory is the place where this glorious God and all the fullness of His glory are experienced. God is glorious; therefore, the place where He dwells must be glorious.

Third, “glory” describes the physical transformation that takes place as Christians enter heaven. Nothing in heaven can be inglorious. Everything in God’s presence receives a complete and instant makeover. We like stories of before and after. We celebrate a home that is remodeled or when someone loses weight. We celebrate the before and after when the after is an improvement. In heaven, we will experience the greatest before and after imaginable. Before this transformation, we are feeble, frail, weak and dying. After, we take on a “glorified” body, one that does not grow weary or break down. We receive a new body that will last forever. Jesus went through a similar transformation after His resurrection. In the incarnation, God’s Son became a man. He struggled with the same mortal body as we all do. He took on ordinary human flesh. He became hungry and thirsty. After His resurrection everything changed. He received a glorified body. In John 17:5 Jesus prays for the disciples, *“Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”* After His death and resurrection, He took back the full manifestation of His glory. Later, in this same passage in John, Jesus states that He will share this glory with His disciples in John 17:22-24, *“The glory which You have given Me I have given to*

them...Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

Prior to the incarnation, Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God possessed infinite glory. During the incarnation, the Son of God was still glorious, but He set aside the manifestation of His glory as He became fully human. After the resurrection, the Father restored the Son to His rightful place with the infinite manifestation of His divine attributes.

God is glorious. Heaven is glorious. Therefore, all who dwell with God in His heaven must be made glorious just like the Son. Paul says it this way in Romans 8:16-17 *“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”* We are glorified with Him. Together with Christ, all who believe in Him will be glorified together with Him. God’s glorious nature spills over, out of the Trinity and into His heavenly dwelling and into heavenly dwelling people. Christ shares His glory with the children of God. This is not surprising, as children of the same father tend to have similar attributes as their father. God is our Father and Christ is our brother. If God is glorious and the Son of God is glorious, then the children of God will at some level share in the attributes of their Father and their Brother. I Corinthians 2:6-7 states it this way, *“Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory.”* God predetermined in eternity past that believers would receive this glorified existence in heaven. *“The allusion is apparently to the experience of full and final glory on the part of the redeemed.”*⁴²

⁴²E. F. Harrison, 483.

Fourth, “glory” describes an act of worship. One aspect of worship is ascribing to God His attribute of glory. The angels do this. In Luke 2:14 they said to the shepherds, “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.*” God is glorious and ascribing glory to God is an act of worship. “This doxological use is common to humans and angles alike. It pervades the present age and the age to come.”⁴³ In Matthew 15:31, when Jesus performed many miracles, “*The crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.*” The crowds worshiped God by attributing glory to God. They worshiped Him by recognizing His true nature. God is glorious. Articulating this truth becomes an act of worship. Psalm 29:1-2 says, “*...Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength; Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; Worship the Lord in holy array.*” God is glorious and strong. As part of the worship of the nation, Israelites came together to tell God what is true of Him. They gave glory to God. God is glorious and praising His glorious nature marks the worship by His creatures.

Fifth, on a few occasions this attribution, which is normally reserved for God, is applied to nations, people and places. For instance, Jesus stated in Matthew 6:29 that “*Solomon in all his glory*” could not dress as excellently as the lilies of the field. In the case of Solomon, his glory came from his ability to dress in splendid clothing due to his immense wealth. Here we see the limited nature of glory when applied to a person. Solomon’s glory was limited. He possessed the attribute of glory, but his glory seems small when contrasted with field lilies. Abraham also possessed glory with reference to his great wealth of livestock, silver and gold.⁴⁴ He is literally weighed down with livestock, silver and gold. (The Hebrew

⁴³Ibid, 480.

⁴⁴Genesis 13:2 “Now Abram was very rich (weighed down or glorified) in livestock, in silver and in gold.”

word for glory derives its meaning from the Hebrew word meaning “to be heavy.”) In addition to people, the temple that Solomon built represented magnificence, fame and glory to all the nations. The temple possessed a limited glory but was so impressive as to catch the attention of other nations based on its ornate beauty.⁴⁵ In Hosea, God states that He will change the condition of Ephraim from glory to shame. In this case, the northern kingdom (Ephraim) had sinned and fallen under the judgment of God.⁴⁶ God removed their glory from them, meaning their wealth and prestige, as an act of judgment. In this case, glory primarily describes wealth and reputation. Ephraim, Abraham, Solomon and the temple, on a very limited scale, bore the attribute of glory in a similar way that God bears the attribute of glory, i.e., splendor, reputation, wealth, and beauty. “Made in God’s image, mankind is set apart to rule over the earth... Yet in contrast to God and even to the natural order, humans are weak and transient, likened to the grass that perishes. Nevertheless, because the soul outlasts the body, it can be called his glory... some people, notably rulers, attain the glory that attaches to high station... Glory expresses one’s good reputation, the honor in which one is held by one’s peers.”⁴⁷ Some limited aspect of divine glory can be found in humans, nations and places.

These five uses of glory are found throughout Scripture.⁴⁸ “Glory” describes an attribute of God, a place where God dwells, a

⁴⁵1 Chronicles 22:5 “...the house that is to be built for the LORD shall be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all lands.”

⁴⁶Hosea 4:7 “The more they multiplied, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame.”

⁴⁷E. F. Harrison, 479.

⁴⁸There may be a few other uses. For instance, in II Corinthians 4:17-18 Paul says, “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” Is the

transformation of God's people, and an act of worship. Each derives its meaning from the primary use of the term. Glory describes the essential character of God. He is glorious. Therefore, the place He dwells must be glorious and the individuals who dwell in that place must share in that glory and the only reasonable action in God's presence is to give Him glory.

eternal weight of "glory" another usage? In context it seems as if Paul is describing the type of reward an individual receives from God. Paul describes the reward as eternal, glorious and weighty. It could be simply that he has in mind the glorified body prepared for believers. The next verse, II Corinthians 5:1 compares the human body as an earthly one in need of a replacement. In 5:2, Paul says that we are "*longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven.*" In this instance, believers go through momentary and light afflictions and God responds by providing, eternal and significant glorified bodies. In which case, this goes along with the fourth usage of the term.

Appendix 3, Technical Look at a Few Passages

THE CREATION AS A PRISM TO DISPLAY GOD'S GLORY IN PSALM 19

Introduction

The object of this Appendix is to exegete Psalm 19:1-6, with particular attention to the first verse set in context with the rest of the chapter. Psalm 19, attributed to King David, uses poetic discourse to present God as a God of revelation. Thematically, the chapter is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on creation's role in God's self-revelation. The second half of the psalm presents the revelatory role of Scripture. Both creation and Scripture are viewed as positive sources for understanding God's attributes. "God hath two sorts of books...the book of his creatures...and the book of his scriptures."⁴⁹ The creation presents beauty, power, wisdom and order which all point back to the glory of the Creator. These specific attributes and many more, though not explicitly listed in the text, flow from the poetic language which allows the reader to contemplate the "intrinsic worth of God, his ineffable majesty."⁵⁰ The conclusion proceeds naturally, that God Himself must be even more beautiful and more glorious than the heavens He has created. Though the focus on this passage is the heavenly realm, this revelation is not limited to the celestial bodies for "the Bible regards all creation in all its parts as the work of God."⁵¹

⁴⁹Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1886), 1:311.

⁵⁰E. F. Harrison, "Glory," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1982), 2:478.

⁵¹Georg Bertram, "ergon," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, ed. Gerhard Kittel, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 637.

The second half of Psalm 19 provides a specific list of various divine attributes as disclosed in the Scripture itself. The reader discovers that the nature of God's Word is inherently perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true, and therefore should be cherished. These attributes belong to Scripture because Scripture originates from God Himself. Just as observing the creation draws the reader into contemplating the essential attributes of God, so too the second section lifts the reader's mind to the essential attributes of God as observed in His Word. The Bible and all creation exist to display God's glory. This common purpose, the magnification of the attributes of God, proceeds from the initial purpose statement of the psalm: "The heavens declare the glory of God." Psalm 19:1-6 proclaims that God's ultimate purpose is His own glory, and that all creation functions as a prism through which individual attributes of God are observed, and that His glory is known.

Background to Glory

Historically, the purpose for the existence of the universe in general, and the existence of humanity in particular, is summarized in the third question of the children's catechism: "Why did God make you and all things?" Answer: "For His own glory." The more perplexing issue, when comprehending the concept of "the glory of God," is to determine what it means to say that all things exist for the glory of God? This goes well beyond claiming that all things exist because of God. The universe exists because God made it exist. This answers the question of causality. How did humanity get here? God created. Simply affirming the causal relationship between God and the universe leaves the question of motive unanswered, which is why the catechism does not stop at causality. The first question of the catechism is "who made you?" Answer: "God made me." The second question, "what else did God make?" Answer: "God made me

and all things.”⁵² The Bible propels the mind to think in this way. From the opening verse of the Bible, humanity is driven to think in this way. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Critical to our understanding of the source of all that exists comes from Genesis 1:1, along with a chorus of other passages throughout the Bible.

Believing that God created each individual, the universe and all things in it is not sufficient. That is why the children’s catechism moves so quickly from cause to purpose. The third question turns this catechism to the fundamental question of “why?” “Why did God make you and all things?” Purpose fills the response, “for His own glory.” And that is the pursuit of this paper from the perspective of the nineteenth psalm. What is meant by the statement that all things exist for God’s glory? What is God’s glory and how do creation and the Bible achieve the goal of reflecting God’s glory? God’s glory is “a comprehensive term...reflecting such qualities as esteem, reputation, worth, honor...particularly appropriate for describing His moral uniqueness and grandeur as Lord of the universe.”⁵³ In understanding this, God’s glory describes the condensed, coalescence of all of the attributes of God, the summation of all of His attributes experienced and revealed simultaneously. So God displays, shows and demonstrates His characteristics.

Creation and all other divine works in history become the instrument through which God demonstrates His attributes. God fully possesses all of His attributes at all times and in all circumstances. So even though He demonstrates particular attributes in a specific divine works, He never relinquishes the other attributes. Rather, His specific works in history focus our minds on specific attributes. For instance,

⁵²One sample of a Children’s Catechism can be found at www.reformed.org/documents/child_cat.htm

⁵³E. F. Harrison, 2:478.

the creation reflects God's power, along with a host of His other attributes, while the demonstration of God's kindness becomes more manifest in other divine works. The cross of Christ reflects God's justice and mercy, along with a host of other attributes, but the attribute of God's invincibility may be more cloaked in that event. At the resurrection, His invincibility shines forth in full force, along with other divine attributes.

Glory is not the only comprehensive term to describe God. Majesty, honor and splendor are also used as inclusive descriptors of God.⁵⁴ However, the etymology of the term and its use throughout the Old Testament give credence to the term "glory" as the most complete and comprehensive of all the attributive terms. The Hebrew noun meaning glory finds its derivation from the Hebrew verb which means "to be heavy." Glory in the Old Testament is used at times to describe "the weighty" character of buildings, humans, nations and God.⁵⁵ When glory is applied to humans, it usually describes the individual's "character, position, wealth or power."⁵⁶ In Genesis 31, Jacob is described as possessing glory, with reference to his material possessions. In I Chronicles 22, the temple possessed "glory" because of its beauty and its reputation outside the nation of Israel. In the case of God, His glory is the weight of all of his attributes, the coalescence of the panoply of God's characteristics.

In the book of Exodus, the glory of the Lord is an important theme in Israel's ongoing encounter with God. They see the glory of the Lord manifested in the form of a cloud in the wilderness in Exodus chapter 16. Later, as the nation gathers at the base of Mount

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Gerhard Von Rad, "doxa," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, ed. Gerhard Kittel, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 238.

⁵⁶E. F. Harrison, 478.

Sinai, the glory of the Lord descends. “The glory of the Lord rested upon Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it for six days,” Exodus 24:16. In Exodus 40:34-35, “the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” This theophany is repeated at the dedication of Solomon’s temple, as described in I Kings 8 and II Chronicles, when the priests are unable to enter because of the glory of the Lord.

One of the more dramatic moments in the encounters between humanity and God involves Moses on Mount Sinai. Moses, having experienced God’s glory manifested in the cloud, seeks something more from God. He pleaded with God, “show me your glory.” God warns Moses that no person can experience His full glory and live. However, God says to Moses in Exodus 33:19, “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.” Moses, forbidden from experiencing the fullness of God’s glory, does experience a portion of God’s glory by experiencing God’s goodness and compassion. This is one of several passages that present the glory of God as a comprehensive term and other attributes as a subset of His glory.

The glory of God in the Old Testament is linked to the Shekinah glory of God, a manifestation of God’s glory represented as radiant light too powerful for the human eye.⁵⁷ Psalm 105:3 links God’s glory with His moral goodness as the psalmist urges readers to

⁵⁷Albrecht Oepke, “lampo ktl,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, ed. Gerhard Kittel, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 23.

“Glory in His holy name.” Isaiah 6 also connects God's glory with His moral goodness as the angels sing the Trisagion of “holy, holy, holy” combined with the statement that “the whole earth is filled with His glory.” I Chronicles 29:11 communicates a series of attributes including God’s greatness, power, glory, victory, majesty, dominion and that God is exalted. However, two verses later, reflection on these attributes that prompts the writer to declare “we praise Your glorious name.” In the prologue to John’s Gospel, the reader is reminded of Moses’ limitations with reference to experiencing all of God’s glory. “No one has seen God at any time,” John 1:18. However, in John 1:14, the Logos reveals God’s glory. “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Even the glory of the Logos was experienced through specific, individual attributes of grace and truth. The glory of God was experienced in the life of Christ through the experience of individual attributes.

What is the glory of God and how does God’s glory relate to the panoply of His attributes? Understanding God’s glory “must come in multiple terms. Only then can the comprehensiveness of the concept be appreciated.”⁵⁸ Using an illustration from physics, in the study of light, scientists discovered that white light is actually the coalescence of all the spectrum of waves of light. Condensed light is white in appearance, but when that light is put through a prism, the individual colors become visible as a spectrum of colors.⁵⁹ God’s glory is like white light, the expression of the coalescence of His attributes and all of His mighty works.

The creation functions like a prism, allowing humanity to observe God’s individual attributes. Not only creation, but divine acts

⁵⁸E. F. Harrison, 479.

⁵⁹Edwin R. Jones and Richard L. Childers, *Contemporary College Physics*, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1990), 611.

in the affairs of humanity also functions like a prism, allowing the creature to observe specific features of His Creator. God’s word also functions like a prism where readers observe the individual attributes of God, and are drawn into an experience of His glory. Therefore, all things exist for His glory. Creation, divine works in history and the Bible all reveal specific attributes of God and point humanity back to the essence of who God is and the coalescence of all God’s attributes and might works. In a word, God uses all things to point to His glory.

Translation

The heading to this Psalm attributes the authorship to David. The intended purpose was for corporate worship. The first verse, labeled as the second verse in the Hebrew text, with the header constituting verse one, reads

“הַשָּׁמַיִם מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד־אֱלֹהִים וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו מְגִיד הַרְקִיעַ:”

and is translated, “The heavens recount the glory of God and the expanse declares the work of His hands.” There are two verbal forms in this verse, **מְסַפְּרִים** and **יָדָיו**. **מְסַפְּרִים** is a piel masculine plural participle from **סַפַּר** meaning “to recount” or “to declare.”⁶⁰ **מְגִיד** is a hifil, masculine singular participle, from **גָּדַר** meaning “to declare” or “to tell.”⁶¹ The first word of the verse is a plural noun with a definite article, **הַשָּׁמַיִם**, translated “the heavens.”⁶² The heavens are the subject of the verb “to recount.” The last word of the verse is a singular noun with a definite article, **הַרְקִיעַ**, translated “the expanse” or “the vault of heaven.”⁶³ The expanse is the subject of the second

⁶⁰Francis Brown, Driver, S. A. and Briggs, Charles A., *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 708.

⁶¹Ibid., 616.

⁶²Ibid., 1029.

⁶³Ibid., 956.

verb, “to declare.” These two subjects, taken together, depict the source of revelation. God’s glory, that is His glory as it is revealed in His individual works in creation, is seen by through the sun, moon and stars.

The object of each clause is a construct noun. The first construct noun, **כְּבוֹד**, is translated “glory.” The absolute noun which follows assigns God as the possessor of this glory. The Creator’s intent in all His works is to produce revelatory evidence of His essential character. In this case, the stars and the heavens communicate something much greater than themselves. Psalm 19 “gives a more precise cosmological delineation which exalts the **כְּבוֹד** of God far above the sphere of natural phenomena.”⁶⁴ The object of the second verb is also a masculine singular noun in construct. The conjunction attached to the front of the word introduces the second clause of the sentence. It is translated “and work of.” This word, **וּמַעֲשֵׂהוּ** “is often seen in the Old Testament as a reference to his creative work.”⁶⁵ It is followed by a dual construct noun with a third masculine singular suffix, “his hands.” These two clauses, taken in concert, correspond to the same theme. “The heavens declare the glory of God” and, the same idea said in a slightly different way, “the expanse declares the works of His hands.”

The second verse expands on this theme by espousing the degree by which the heavens accomplish their task, both in duration and in intensity. This verse reads, **יּוֹם לְיוֹם יְבִיעַ אָמַר וְלַיְלָה לְלַיְלָה יַחְנֶה דָּעַת:** and is translated as, “Day to day pours forth speech and night to night reveals knowledge.” As with the first verse, there are two clauses connected to one another by a conjunction. The first verb is a hifil, third

⁶⁴Gerhard V. Rad, 240.

⁶⁵Georg Bertram, 637.

masculine singular, imperfect verb from נבע, meaning “to pour forth.”⁶⁶ The second verb is a third masculine singular, piel imperfect form, from חרה, which is used in poetic language and means “to declare” or “to make known.”⁶⁷ What is revealed? Speech and knowledge, both singular absolute nouns, are the objects of these two verbs. The opening masculine singular noun, repeated with an inseparable preposition, is the subject of the first verb, “day to day.” Similarly, the subject of the second verb is a masculine singular noun with conjunction, repeated with an inseparable preposition, “and night to night.” All day long speech pours forth and all night long knowledge is revealed.

What type of speech is poured forth? How is this knowledge revealed? According to verse 3, the speech pouring forth is not audible. Verse three reads

אֵין-אִמָּר וְאֵין דְּבָרִים בְּלִי שְׁמֵעַ קוֹלָם: and is translated as “There is no speech, nor are there words. Their voice fails to be heard.” The verse opens with a particle of negation, meaning “is not,” combined with a masculine singular absolute noun, meaning “speech.” This is followed by another particle of negation with a conjunction, “and is not” combined with a masculine plural absolute noun, “words.” The next word, בְּלִי, is an adverb and in this context functions as an adverb of negation, meaning “failure.”⁶⁸ The lone verbal form in the sentence is a nihil, masculine singular participle from שמע, meaning “to hear.”⁶⁹ The object of the verb is a masculine singular noun in construct with third masculine plural suffix meaning, “their voice.” It is not as though the stars are speaking audibly. It is not words that can be detected by the human ear.

⁶⁶Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, 615.

⁶⁷Ibid., 296.

⁶⁸Ibid., 115.

⁶⁹Ibid., 1034.

The NIV's translation presents a very different understanding of the poetic language. "*There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.*"⁷⁰ This translation implies the particle of negation applies to any attempt at limiting the scope of revelation. In other words, there is no place the stars fail in their revelatory mission. The KJV and NKJV also take this approach. However, the ASV, NASB, NLT, ESV, HCSV, NCV, all follow along the same lines as the translation given in this appendix above. The text favors the linguistic approach of the majority of popular translations. However, the context seems to favor the NIV's approach.

Two major contextual issues provide evidence of this alternative translation. First, the fourth verse is not set in contrast to verse three, but rather builds on what was just said. "Their line has gone out in all the earth and their speech to the end of the world." If verse three is being refuted in verse four, some contrasting ideas would be expected in verse four. The second contextual issue involves the parallel verses of three and four contrasted with verses five and six. The poetic language in verse five describes the sun "as a bridegroom." Then in verse six, the same particle of negation that occurs in the third verse with reference to the stars occurs with reference to the sun's rays. "Nothing is hidden from its heat." There is a parallel of themes with the stars and the sun. If verse three depicts the stars as verse five depicts the sun, then the stars speak at night the way the sun shines during the day. The sun's heat bears down during the day and there is no place where to hide from its heat. The stars' lights shine at night and there is no place to hide from them. It is this contextual issue that likely explains the rationale for the NIV and the KJV translations. There are no textual variants in the verse, so this is purely a translational issue. The location in the

⁷⁰The NIV includes a footnote in their translation that expresses the minority opinion. "They have no speech, there are no words; no sound is heard from them."

Psalter provides for some additional considerations as to the proper translation of the verse. With these contextual considerations and the possibility of variant translations within the poetic passage, the alternative translation is preferable. Verse three is then translated as “There is no speech, nor are there words, where their voice fails to be heard.”

The fourth verse reads as follows:

בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ יָצָא קוֹם וּבִקְצֵה תִּבֵּל מִלֵּיהֶם לְשִׁמְשׁ שָׁם-אֵהָל בְּהֵם:

and is translated, “*Their line has gone out in all the earth and their speech to the end of the world. He set the sun in its tent.*” The first clause of the verse continues the flow of thought concerning the stars. אָצָא is a third masculine singular qal perfect verb from אָצָא, meaning “to go out.”⁷¹ The subject of the verb is a masculine singular construct noun, קוֹם, with a third masculine plural suffix, meaning “their line.”⁷² “Their line” likely refers to the visible beam that marks the origin of their light tracked from its source to its destination. The destination is given at the opening of the sentence. A masculine singular construct noun with an inseparable preposition, “in all” is followed by the feminine absolute noun with a definite article, “the earth.” A feminine plural noun in construct with a third masculine plural suffix, translated “their speech,” gives the subject of the verb. This clause functions as an affirmation of the extent and duration of the declaration given by the stars in verse three. There is nowhere their voice is not heard. Their speech is heard in all the earth.

The second clause of verse four moves the discussion from the heavenly realms in general to the specific revelatory work of the sun. The first word of this sentence is a common singular absolute

⁷¹Ibid., 422.

⁷²Ibid., 876.

noun with an inseparable preposition and definite article meaning, “to the sun.” The verb is a third masculine singular qal perfect form from <wc, meaning “to set.”⁷³ There is no subject explicitly given in the sentence. However, the third masculine singular verb and the context of the passage point to God as the one who “sets the sun.” He sets the sun “in its tent,” a masculine singular absolute noun followed by a preposition with a third masculine plural suffix.

The fifth and sixth verses continue the theme introduced at the end of verse four. These verses, which provide more details of the activity of the sun, read as follows:

וְהוּא כְּתֵתָן יֵצֵא מִחֻפְתּוֹ יֵשִׁי כְּגִבּוֹר לְרוּץ אֲרָחַ:

מִקְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם מוֹצֵאוֹ וְתִקְוֵתּוֹ עַל-קְצוֹתֵם וְאֵין גִּסְתָּר מִחֻפְתּוֹ:

The following is the translation: “And it is like a bridegroom coming out of its chamber. It exalts as a strong one running its course. Its going forth is from one end of the heavens and its circuit to the other end. And nothing is hidden from its heat.” The qal masculine singular participle comes from יֵצֵא, “to come out.”⁷⁴ The sun comes out “like a bridegroom.” This is the same verbal root word from the preceding verse, furthering the parallel themes of stars and sun in their common task of declaring God’s glory. Employing a simile by using a masculine singular noun with an inseparable preposition, the lyrical then paints a picture of the sun being like a bridegroom. As a bridegroom comes out of his chamber, so also the sun comes out of “its chamber,” a feminine singular construct noun with a third masculine singular suffix.

⁷³ibid., 962.

⁷⁴ibid., 422.

The appropriate response to a wedding is rejoicing. **ישׁ** is a third masculine singular qal imperfect verb from **ישׁ**, meaning “to rejoice” or “to exalt.”⁷⁵ The psalmist uses another simile by connecting the inseparable preposition to an adjective that is used substantively, “like a strong one.” The sun **לָרוץ**, a qal, infinitive construct from **רוץ**, meaning “to run”⁷⁶ followed by a noun common singular, “to run its course.” The course is from one end of the heavens to the other. The closing clause of this passage opens with a conjunction and another adverb functioning as a particle of negation, “and nothing.” This negation is set against **נִסְתָּר** which is a masculine singular nifil participle from **סתר**, meaning “to hide.”⁷⁷ Nothing can hide “from its heat,”⁷⁸ which is a noun feminine singular construct with an inseparable preposition and a third masculine singular suffix.

Exegesis

In Psalm 19, David declares that “the heavens are telling of the glory of God.” The King of Israel says the heavens tell a story. They speak of God’s essential glorious character. They are telling this story through the specific, observable attributes of God. God is a God of revelation. He reveals His glory through obvious, manifest, clear and irrefutable ways. The first verse gives the purpose of creation while the second verse gives the pervasiveness of the revelation. God’s self-revelation of His own glory occurs all day long and all night long. God’s self-revelation is poured out on humanity. The stars in the night and the sun during the day scream out to humanity that God is glorious and that He has done glorious things.

⁷⁵Ibid., 965.

⁷⁶Ibid., 930.

⁷⁷Ibid., 711.

⁷⁸Ibid., 328.

This revelation so permeates the cosmos that it necessitates humanity's accountability to God. As the individual works of God point back to His essential nature, humanity perceives the God who is. It is not that individuals, through some prodigious search, might be able to know of God. Psalm 19 claims the flow of information from God to people continues unabated both night and day. Romans 1:20 advances this theme in the New Testament. "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." For David, God's natural revelation and His specific revelation in Scripture, "prompts a response of self-examination."⁷⁹ The glory of God "is the divine glory which reveals the nature of God in creation and in his acts, which fill both heaven and earth."⁸⁰

Application

"Glory" is the term to summarize the coalescence of the panoply of God's attributes. It expresses all that God is and all that He has done. In His presence, God's glory shines. Believers will spend eternity comprehending and apprehending His magnificence. Until then, there is the daily reflection of God's glory as shown in the individual attributes of God. His glory is woven into the fabric of our lives. Like the stars in the heavens, God displays His glory in His working in individuals and His church. In the New Testament, Paul says that believers manifest God's attributes. Ephesians 2:7 provides clear teaching on why salvation has come to believers, "*so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in*

⁷⁹Allen P. Ross, "Psalms," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications, 2000), 807.

⁸⁰Gerhard Kittel, "doxa," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, ed. Gerhard Kittel, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 244.

kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Believers are God’s grace on display. Just as the stars and the sun declare God’s attributes, we too, display His attributes. We will forever be a reflection of the greatness of His grace, kindness, love and mercy. Ultimately, we exist as individuals, as a community of faith and as part of creation, to present to the universe the attributes of our God. We exist for His glory. We too, function as instruments of God, individual prisms through which the glory of God is manifest. The far-reaching application of this understanding of God addresses the most basic ministry needs. This fundamental doctrine fuses every moment of a believer’s life with meaning. Trials come, and we allow God to reflect His glory through us in how we respond to the trials. Mission opportunities emerge and we use them for the purpose of functioning as a prism through which God displays His glory. Ultimately, we are to be like the stars and the sun, continually, day and night, declaring the glory of God.

