

The Glory of the Lord

Stained glass is a uniquely Christian art form. Its origin is found in the mosaics that adorned the 5th century Italian churches. The stained glass artist understands the unique characteristics of the glass window. Stained glass has been called "Painting with Light." Mr. Gibbs, the craftsman behind our window calls stained glass "A Living Painting", because the look and feel of the window changes throughout the day as the light from outside the window changes. However you choose to express it, stained glass is a magnificent medium of expression for the Christian artist. It is no wonder that the church developed it and claimed it as its own. What a wonderful way to glorify God with something so beautiful and so fleeting. What better medium to attempt to capture the glory of our Lord.

"Words will always evoke a picture in the mind before an artist ever depicts that which is seen. As Christians we believe with Paul that the Glory of God is revealed in the face of Jesus, and that will cause us to ask the question, How shall we then depict Him?"

Lord Ramsey of Canterbury from the book *The Face of Christ*.



His Appearance

"Christ is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of his nature." Hebrews 1:3

In the stained glass window Christ is central, above all things. He is lifted up: no figure in the window is above Him. He is above all things. He is exalted, glorified, standing as if He has ascended or is ready to return. His right foot is slightly raised as if in anticipation of His moving forward. His arms are open wide, slightly raised in invitation for us to "come" into His presence.

We chose to depict Christ as majestic, kingly and ready to call us home. Behind His head as part of the radiance is the cross. Above His head is a golden crown bejeweled with every precious stone. The gold signifies purity and the jewels are like the priestly ephod, suggesting the tribes of Israel. His clothing is white, signifying His sinless righteousness. His robe is red signifying His blood shed for us. The red robe surrounds His luminous figure and draws our eyes to Him. His face is lifted toward heaven, as an example to us of His great love and obedient dependence on the Father. His features are barely distinguishable due to the radiance of God's glory. This portrayal of Christ shows both His human and divine nature. The marks of the nails are visible on His hands. Behind Him you see the cross, but He is free from it. The sin debt is paid.

The study of the glory of the Lord began with scriptures that described the scenes of the heavenly throne. This was essential because the window was based on those scriptures depicting Christ's radiance and glory. But the glory of our Lord is much more than His appearance, His splendid abode or the beauty of His creation, no matter how staggering those may be.

When searching the scriptures for references to the glory of the Lord, you will find His glory springs forth from His humility. It is magnified by His suffering and death. The resurrection shows forth His glory in power and victory over death. His return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords is its pinnacle. Jesus Christ will restore His church and deliver His beloved people to the throne of God in full glory. We will witness this unfolding as guests of the King. We will be there, His beloved, presented to the Father. We will be there, casting down our golden crowns at His feet with honor and praises that I am sure will be heard throughout all creation. We will be there sharing in His glory.

Window to the Glory of the Lord

As believers we are given an invitation to sit at the Master's feet and learn from Him. To hear Him speak through the Word is a thrill and a joy that brings a great richness to our lives. To encounter His glory we need only to open our Bibles and study for ourselves what the scripture reveal. Be encouraged as you consider what the scripture teaches about the Glory of the Lord; for everyone who longs to know Him more or desires to be transformed in His presence they will be satisfied. It is my prayer that you would seek to discover more and more of the glory of the Father, of His One and Only Son and the role the Holy Spirit plays in enabling us to enter into that glory. May you be blessed as you continue to seek Him through the window of the scriptures, if only to catch a glimpse of Him, if only to see Him as through a glass darkly. In death we will enter into His presence and know Him fully. At the resurrection we will know and celebrate our completeness in Christ Jesus.

Do you know that even though *"you are dust, and to dust you shall return,"* that we were also created for His glory? The study of the Glory of the Lord will explore the purposes of God and help you reexamine your life in light of all that He reveals about His Glory.

Four years ago when the design of the stained glass window was completed I felt compelled to not only write about the elements of the window, but to delve more deeply in to the study of the Exalted Christ. I was as completely intimidated by the scope of the study as I had been of the design of the window. Soon I had to confess that I knew next to nothing about the Glory of the Lord and what it means. But I learned, that was the very best place to begin.

Themes from the Study of the Glory of the Lord

Verse

John 17:4-5

"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

Isaiah 61:1-3

"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor "

Matthew 16:24-26

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

Sharing in His Glory

Christ's Work

The Glory of the Father.

Jesus gave his disciples, present and future, the glory the Father had given Him. The glory He bestows on the believer comes with a confession, a cross and a call. It comes in the same manner as it came to our Lord Jesus, from the Father. It comes through a humble confession of who we are in light of the glory of God. It comes in answering a call to service and in entering into the death we share in Christ Jesus. It is a death we die to self, cease living to please ourselves, but instead live for God at all cost. To do this is to share in the glory of the Lord.

A Confession

A Glorious Message

The Old Testament word for proclaim is qara. It means to enunciate a specific message to a specific person, with the intention to have a specific result (Zodhiates). Jesus came to proclaim good news, freedom and God's favor. The result was to heal the hurting and to release man from spiritual darkness. This word, qara, shows us our place in the in the work of Christ. The message of Jesus Christ has been given to us, a specific person. It has been proclaimed for a specific result. Although we are invited to share in His work, the weight of the task to proclaim good news is placed on Jesus. Jesus lived and died to make true that which we are to proclaim as truth. Its intended result is the restoration of man to his state before the fall.

A Cross

Strength in His Glory

Why did the Father allow Peter, James and John to see the glory of the transfiguration? Why was Paul taken up into heaven? Why did Stephen see Christ standing at the throne of God as he was being stoned to death? And why was John given a tour of heaven while in exile? The showing forth of His glory came to these men to strengthen them in times of trial. These trials were either upon them or were to come. Such is our tendency as men to doubt, that these men chosen to lay the foundation of Christ's church were given this experience so they could stand firm and not doubt.

If we are seeking to experience and know the glory of the Lord, we must remember that its revelation comes for times of trials and with a call upon our lives. His glory comes with a cross that we bear in His strength.

Themes From the Study of the Glory of the Lord

Verse

Exodus 33:18

"Then Moses said, "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!"

Isaiah 43: 7

"Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made"

2 Timothy 2:10

"For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory."

I John 3:2-3

"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

A Call

Responding to God's Glory

I've often thought Moses was brazen in asking to see the glory of the Lord. But the Lord obliged Moses and hid him in the cleft of the rock and passed before him declaring His name. The Lord showed Moses His compassion and goodness. Whatever motivated Moses to ask for a revelation of God's glory, it was met with the Lord's willingness to show him as much of His glory that he was able to endure. This encounter between Moses and the Living God proved essential to the work Moses was given to accomplish. Throughout his life God's glory gave legitimacy to Moses leadership as he established Moses as the mediator between Himself and the people of Israel.

Changed by His Glory

Created for His Glory

Called by His Name

God's glory is revealed when Christ's character is shown in the life of the believer. It is as a state of blessedness that a believer enters as he is conformed into the image of Christ. We can manifest the glory of God in several ways. First, like the Psalmist, we glorify or magnify God in our praise. Second, we are daily conformed to the likeness of Christ by living in faith. To do so, it is necessary that we allow the indwelling Spirit of God to guide and control our thoughts, words and actions. Third, we glorify God through sharing the gospel which enables men to hear the truth and believe.

The Glory of Salvation

The Transformation of Our Innermost Beings

There is a moment in eternity on which my life hinges. This moment is the difference between life and death, between glory and condemnation. It encompasses both the purpose of God and the deep realization of my poverty before Him. When the cross and sinful man collide there is a transformation of our innermost beings.

With the cross of Christ comes an invitation into glory, into the very presence of God. With the cross comes the promise of complete restoration. We receive the power that transforms and indwells. Once sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, there is nothing that can separate us from His presence as we enter into His unspeakable love.

Transformed by His Glory

Conformed to His Image

The word "know" in I John 3:2-3 means to perceive with the outward senses, to perceive or understand with the mind. The word "appears" in this verse means to make manifest or to reveal, to denote an act of divine revelation, to make visible. This verse tells us that when Christ reveals Himself to us we are able to know and understand Him with our minds. The mind plays an essential part in the transformation of the believer. We have the God given ability to understand and because His Spirit dwells in us we are able to perceive the things of God. It is in knowing Him in this way that our transformation begins.

One day, we will be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. The sight of the Glorified Christ will glorify us. When we see Him we will be physically changed and spiritually restored.

Themes From the Study of the Glory of the Lord

Verse

Ephesians 1:18

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe."

1 Corinthians 15:52

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed."

In Christ

The Riches of His Glory

Paul shows us in his prayer for the Ephesians how it is our blessing in Christ transform us. He prayed for God's people to be given a spirit of wisdom and revelation so we can know more of Christ and our riches in Him. Our understanding of God's word and the intent of His heart give us direction and stability. It enables us to be obedient and correctly acknowledge Him in our lives. It allows us to know the hope of our calling, the riches of our inheritance, the mighty power that is active in us. The scriptures show us that the power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in the heavenlies can be active in us. It allows us to know the One who is above all rule and authority, power and dominion. We are able to know the One who fills all in all.

The Resurrection

The Power of His Glory

The power that raised Christ from the dead is an awesome theme to mediate upon. The same power that spoke creation into existence, the same power that cleansed me from sin and released me from bondage, the same power that indwells my being is the same power that will one day raise me from the dead and transform me fully.

The power that brings death to life is the greatest expression of the glory of God. Like our Lord before us our resurrection can only come forth from death. Referring to this Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 15 that what you sow does not come to life unless it dies. We share in Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Baptism is a picture of this truth. The resurrection is the foundation of our identity in Christ.