

God: Glory Unveiled

2 Peter 1:16-21

By [Rev. Kevin Chiarot](#)

Today is the celebration of the Transfiguration of Jesus. It is an event that tends to be underappreciated in the Western church. Though it is of enormous significance in the East. And I hope, this morning, that, though we be Westerners, we might grasp the richness, and the encouragement. and the hope that is ours in this strange and stunning event.

Now, we are in the middle of a series on God. And we are continuing that series here. This is not an interruption. For this feast of the transfiguration allows us to preach on the glory of God. These texts (the gospel account of the transfiguration from Matthew, and Peter's interpretation of that event from 2 Peter) – these texts will allow us to expound the glory of God, not merely as it belongs to the divine nature, but as that glory is seen in Jesus Christ.

We will make four points. The glory of God, Glory Incarnate, Glory Unveiled, and the Hope of Glory.

I. The Glory of God

First, then, the glory of God. This is the thing that Moses thirsted for in Exodus 33. Moses, who had seen the miracles in Egypt, the plagues, the deliverance at the Red Sea, the manna in the wilderness, the fire and darkness and thunder on the top of Sinai in the giving of the Law – that Moses cries out: Please show me your glory. He wants to move from God's works to God himself. Mighty, many and wondrous works, had been done --- but Moses wants to see God in his essence, in his divine nature and being. His works are glorious because HE is glorious. Thus the yearning, show me your glory.

Now, when we speak of God's glory, we are not singling out one thing. Glory is something like the sum of God's attributes. It is tied to his singular uniqueness. And thus God is jealous for his glory. He will not, he says in Isaiah, give his glory to another.

Thomas Watson said, God's glory is the "sparkling of the deity." Now this brings us closer to what we tend to think of when we think of God's glory. It is a kind of

sparkling. Glory speaks then of the grandeur and the sublimity of God. It is virtually synonymous with majesty. God is even called the Majestic Glory in our text from 2 Peter. Psalm 76 says: Glorious are you, more majestic than the mountains full of prey.

Or, more well known, is Psalm 145: On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. Glorious and majestic is our God. And this Glory is associated with light, with radiance, with shining, with what Watson called the speaking of Deity. Moses found out that God's glory is such a brightness, that you cannot see it and live. God, who is light, dwells, as we've already seen, in unapproachable light. Psalm 104 brings some of this together: You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment. Splendor, light, radiance, majesty.

So, we can sum up the divine glory as follows: It is a kind of luminosity, a fire, an impenetrable, dangerous radiance. It is the intrinsic, essential excellence and effulgence of God.

II. God Incarnate

Now, let's look, secondly, at Glory Incarnate. This God becomes man in Jesus Christ. Glory takes up residence in human flesh. The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, John says, and we beheld his glory.

Now it's important to remember WHO Jesus is. He is the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Son and Word of God. And thus, he possesses the fullness of the divine nature, with the Father and the Spirit, from all eternity. As the book of Hebrews puts it: he is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of his nature. That one, assumes, takes up into his person, a fully human nature. He is, in his divine nature, the burning radiance, the glory that we described, the splendor that Moses could not look on, without dying.

Jesus is the essential Glory of God now in human form. And that means two things. First, it means that, in him, God draws near, and shows us his glory in a form that we can, in fact, gaze upon and live. This is the apostolic testimony: We handled him, we saw him, touched him – we beheld his glory. Throughout his incarnate life, Jesus shows his glory. He shows his glory at the Wedding of Cana with his first miracle when he turns water into wine. He repeatedly says he glorifies the Father in his obedience. He heals the sick, he raises Lazarus from the dead. He even shows his glory in the passion, in his suffering and death, on the cross. And, of course, we see something of his splendor and divinity in the resurrection. And yet, through his life, for the most part, the immediate visible glory of the divine essence is not directly seen.

Yes, we see God's glory in Jesus Christ, but the full radiance of his divinity is obscured, veiled in the form of his human lowliness, wrapped in his suffering and agony. We see the glory of God, but we see it indirectly, and we see it in human form. Except at the transfiguration. There, the glory, the consuming fire that IS God, shines through for just a brief moment.

III. Glory Unveiled

And that brings us to our third point, glory unveiled. And here I want to look briefly at the transfiguration itself. The context in the gospel is that Jesus is beginning to show his disciples, that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things, be killed, and on the third day, be raised. Peter responds with his famous protest: Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you! After which Jesus rebukes Peter: Get behind me SATAN, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. Then, after calling them to deny themselves, and take up their crosses to follow him, Jesus says, just prior to our text, in Matthew chapter 16, verse 28:

Truly I say to you, there are some standing here, who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man *coming in His kingdom*. Remember that coming – for we shall return to it.

About a week later, the event in our text occurs. In v.1 (Matt. 17) Jesus takes Peter, James and John, and leads them up a high mountain by themselves. The references to a high mountain, with the bright cloud, and the voice, evokes the atmosphere of Moses's ascent up Mount Sinai. When the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain. All of which led to Moses' face being irradiated, transfigured by the light of God. And on this high mountain, verse 2 says: Jesus was transfigured before them. This word used is our word 4 metamorphosis.

What has happened, is that all earthly dullness, all the lowliness in which his glory was wrapped, has been stripped away, and the disciples are given a glimpse of the full glory of Christ. The text says his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. Unlike Moses' fading glory, this a glory which is intrinsic and unfading, though, to this point, veiled.

It's important to see what is happening here. And it is this: the divine nature of Christ, his intrinsic radiance, his fiery splendor, his unapproachable light, is now irradiating – lighting up – his human nature, his physical bodily existence. It is in this context, that the voice from the cloud identifies the transfigured One as the beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased. The One whom alone we are to heed – listen to him!

It is this glory which John is given to see, in the risen and exalted Christ in Revelation chapter 1 (read this morning). The Christ whose eyes are a flame of fire, whose face is like the sun shining in full strength. And before this transfigured humanity, John falls down as though dead. And in all three gospel accounts of the transfiguration, we are told that the disciples were terrified.

In both cases, in the vision of Revelation, and on the mount of Transfiguration – dread, terror and the threat of death, follow from seeing the glory unveiled in the embodied Son of God. And here we see something beautiful. In Jesus, dreadful as His glory is, God speaks to us tenderly, and in a human voice. In Revelation he lays his right hand on John and tells him to fear not. That he is the living One who died and is alive forevermore.

So, in the gospel, Jesus comes and touches the disciples, and says get up and do not be afraid. They lift up their eyes and they see Jesus only. Normalcy is restored, the visitors are gone, and the Lord, probably, appears the way he did before the transfiguration. For even followers of Jesus are not yet fit, to live in the light of this glory perpetually. Our bodies are not ready to see this body.

IV. The Hope of Glory

That brings us to our final point, the hope of glory. Here I want to focus first on Peter's account of this event in 2 Peter 1. There, referring to the Transfiguration, he says, that we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the POWER and COMING of our Lord Jesus Christ, but, he says we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

Please do not miss this: Peter speaks of *this* event as Christ's POWER and COMING. And the word for "coming" is the ordinary word for the second coming of the Lord (*parousia*). Or, as the NIV puts it: the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power. Jesus said that some of those listening to him, would see his power and his coming. And Peter clearly sees in this event, not only a foretaste of the COMING of the Lord Jesus, a preview of the Second Advent. The transfiguration IS the seeing of the risen AND coming Jesus in the glory his kingdom. We were eyewitness of his majesty – Peter says. His eyes had seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.

We have, in the Transfiguration, a glimpse, mediated by the human nature of Christ, of the glory and majesty of the Triune God. This is what Paul means when he says Christ in you is the hope of glory. God calls us, the NT says, to his own glory, to his eternal glory in Christ. This is what Jesus is praying in his HP prayer when he says:

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory.

And thus, the burning, irradiated body of light, possessed by the Son, is your calling, your hope. An icon of your future body. So, we have not only a vision of that glory, but the surest confirmation that we too are destined for that same fiery, translucent, embodied majesty – at the coming, the parousia, of the Lord.

We can see this beautifully brought together by Paul in Philippians 3, where he says: But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. At the coming of Jesus – witnessed in advance on the Mount – you get a body like his glorious, divinely luminous body. A body fit for the city which is itself illumined by the glory of God. The transfiguration means: we yearn for the glorious Advent of our Lord. For then, and only then, John tells us, in his first epistle, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Now, in the church year, wisely, the Transfiguration comes right before Lent, because it is “Easter in advance.” Easter in the sense of the guarantee of our resurrection glory, when He, who is raised, comes in power at the end of the age. As such, these texts have a single, practical purpose. They are intended to encourage us in the way of the cross, the only path to glory. They give us a glimpse the glory, lest we lose heart on the journey. This event, you must remember in the midst of life’s travails, is the pledge that you shall surely be transfigured with Him. We need to remember where we are going, in the midst of the cross we are called to bear in life. We need to taste and see the future, or we will faint on the way.

Let’s conclude by looking at how Peter exhorts the church with right after describing the vision of God’s majesty in Christ. He says that the Transfiguration confirms the prophetic word of Scripture, and that we would do well, to pay attention to that word. The transfiguration then, means we should give heed to attend diligently to the (OT) scriptures. I suggest this is not an implication we would naturally draw from the transfiguration. We are not going to get our own private transfiguration-like experiences. The point of the transfiguration is not to create a hankering for visions, and miraculous apparitions.

The event confirms the prophetic text, so pay new, Christ-centered, attention to the glory promised in the text. And we should pay attention to it, he continues, as to a lamp shining in a dark place. But that prophetic word, predicts the coming of a day, the full dawning of the light of God’s glory. Thus, we must give heed to the prophetic word, the text says, UNTIL the day dawns, the day prefigured, by the power and COMING of Jesus, on display in the transfiguration.

The lamp – the Holy Scriptures – will not be necessary in glory, when the light radiates forth in fullness. Scripture is for pilgrims. It is, as Augustine said, the face of God – not now. The glory of God then, is not just an attribute of God. It floods

the humanity of Christ. And it is what the glorification of the saints entails. And it has already begun (now, in our souls, our inner man) when we gaze upon Christ's glory with unveiled faces -- through the Word and Sacraments.

As Paul says, in 2 Corinthians 3: We, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into His image, from one degree of glory to another. Glory has begun in us. It is perfected in Christ's humanity. And it will – this visible, palpable, burning splendor – it will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. At the coming, the parousia, of the Transfigured Lord of glory. Amen.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine*

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).