

INTRODUCTION

In our last session we established that God created all that is, first, for His own pleasure, but, second (and far more important), for His own *glory*. In this session we will dig deeper into this. John Piper writes, “**God’s moral rectitude consists in His valuing the most valuable, namely, Himself.**” Thus, *His ultimate end in all things is to glorify Himself*.

It is time now to define this important term; just what is meant when we speak of God’s glory, or that He be glorified. From Brown’s *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (regarding the Greek equivalents),

Two different Greek word-groups are represented by the English words *glory* and *honour*. From classical Greek onwards *timē* denoted recognition of another’s work by giving him the position and honours he merited. **It is always something given to God or one’s fellow-man (though not necessarily one’s social superior).** *doxa* is often used as a synonym, but in the Bible **it is a quality belonging to God and is recognized by man only in response to him.** It is more often translated glory. **It suggests something which radiates from the one who has it, leaving an impression behind.** As such, it is inapplicable to relationships between men.

We need to discuss the LXX for a moment. ❏ It is the LXX which is responsible for detaching *doxa* from secular Greek for its use in the Bible, moving it from meaning opinion or conjecture, to expressing God’s glory and power. Remaining constant, however, is the word’s general structure, “for in the LXX also [the *doxa* word group is] used for appearance, i.e., for the manifestation of a person, with special stress on the impression this creates on others. This aspect is essential for our understanding of the concept” (Brown).

This is illustrated beautifully in the familiar passage from Isaiah 6.

Turn there, please.

In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is Yahweh of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory” [Hebrew *kabod* (kah-vode)]. And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called out, while the house of God was filling with smoke. Then I said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh of hosts.” (Isaiah 6:1–5)

When the prophet found himself in the presence of “Yahweh of hosts” and experienced the fullness of His immense glory, what was his response? *I am a dead man*. That powerful glory emanating from the throne had a physical and psychological effect on the prophet. *I am about to die*.

“LXX” (Septuagint)

Though somewhat legendary in character, the Letter of Aristeas (second-century BCE) preserves some valuable information on the origins of the Septuagint. It tells us that an Egyptian king, Ptolemy Philadelphus (reigned from 285–246 BCE), commissioned a translation of the Hebrew Bible for his library in Alexandria. Seventy-two translators from Jerusalem were subsequently sent to the Island of Pharos to translate the Torah into Greek.

The term Septuagint, meaning “seventy,” actually refers to the seventy-two translators—six from each tribe of Israel—involved in translating the Pentateuch [Genesis to Deuteronomy] from Hebrew to Greek in the third-century BCE (seventy-two is rounded down to seventy, hence the Roman numeral LXX). The rest of the Hebrew Bible was translated from Hebrew to Greek by various hands over the next century or so. (Ryan Reeves at *The Gospel Coalition*)

So God's inherent glory is not just something that *is*: His abundance, His radiance and splendor, His dignity, His "weight" or "heaviness" (which is a root meaning of *kabod*); it is something that has a profound effect on those who witness it.

Perhaps at this point you are wondering just how this works. That is, if God's glory is something He alone possesses, something unique to Him and as timeless and eternal as He, just how can He be glorified through Creation and, even more befuddling, through broken, fallen man?

Since we cannot *add to* God's glory, what is the point? How does this play out? What is meant that we were created for His glory?

Answering these questions is not unlike trying to bottle air, or capturing moonbeams in a jar. The answer is maddeningly elusive. There *are* answers, but none of them seem to satisfy. Just as you think you are approaching a resolution, it floats away from you, beyond reach. It is reasonably straightforward to picture in our minds God's glory in Himself. He is blindingly holy, glorious to behold, majestic, supreme in everything—and unattainable in the flesh. We get that.

Jonathan Edwards writes,

It appears, that all that is ever spoken of in the Scripture as an ultimate end of God's works, is included in that one phrase, 'the glory of God'; which is the name by which the ultimate end of God's works is most commonly called in Scripture; and seems most aptly to signify the thing.

It seems to me that that can be subdivided into two parts: First, God's *act of Creation* reveals and demonstrates His glory. Absent anything beyond that, just the fact that He *could* do it and *did it*, reveals His glory. No one but true God could do such a thing. Second, however, the content and texture of the biblical narrative make it clear that it *cannot and does not* stop there, that the Creation *itself* has a role to play in glorifying its Maker. The evidence for that?

**The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And the expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Psalm 19:1**

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, both His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. Romans 1:20

**All Your works, O Yahweh, shall give thanks to You,
And Your holy ones shall bless You.
They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom
And talk of Your might;
To make known to the sons of men His mighty deeds
And the glory of the majesty of His kingdom. Psalm 145:10–12**

Earlier I spoke of God's inherent goodness; that plays a role in creation as well, for, as Edwards states, "It is certain that what God aimed at in the creation of the world, was the good that would be the consequence of the creation, in the whole continuance of the thing created." That is, His goodness, as Creator, would flow out from Him and into His Creation.

As with His goodness, so with His glory. And here we return to where I began these sessions: ***His ultimate end in all things is to glorify Himself.*** In mere human beings that is self-centered conceit; in God, it is the sublime demonstration of His righteousness—or, "rightness."

Edwards: And God had regard to it in this manner, as he had a supreme regard to himself, and value for his own infinite, internal glory. It was this value for himself that caused him to value and seek that his internal glory should flow forth from himself. It was from his value for his glorious perfections of wisdom, righteousness, etc. that he valued the proper exercise and effect of these perfections, in wise and righteous acts and effects. It was from his infinite value for his internal glory and fullness, that he valued the thing itself communicated, which is something of the same, extant in the creature. Thus because he infinitely values his own glory, consisting in the knowledge of himself, love to himself, and complacency and joy in himself; he therefore valued the image, communication, or participation of these in the creature. And it is because he values himself, that he delights in the knowledge, and love, and joy of the creature; as being himself the object of this knowledge, love, and complacency. *For it is the necessary consequence of true esteem and love, that we value others' esteem of the same object, and dislike the contrary. For the same reason, God approves of others' esteem and love of himself.* (emphasis added)

Here in this declaration by Edwards is the evidence for the exquisite, albeit maddening problem for mere flesh: There is no obvious endpoint to this; the relationship between God and His Creation—be it the stars, the forests and mountains, or man himself—is utterly *circular*. He has poured out His goodness and glory into the world He made so that His Creation could enjoy as much of His fullness as mere flesh can manage. In that is His love and gracious condescension manifested. We, as His created beings, revel in that connection to a holy God and bless His name. But He, too, revels in the goodness and glory that flows back to Him from us! ***Because God esteems Himself as highest, He is pleased by our high esteem of Him.***

And how is that esteem manifested?

- In our worship—*true* worship:
**Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up,
O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in!
Who is this King of glory? Yahweh strong and mighty, Yahweh
mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, And lift yourselves
up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in! Who is He, this King of
glory?
Yahweh of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah. Psalm 24:7–10**
- In our praise and thanksgiving (two expressions invariably
entwined):
**I will give thanks to Yahweh with all my heart;
I will recount all Your wondrous deeds.
I will be glad and exult in You;
I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. Psalm 9:1–2**
- In our obedience:
**And Samuel said, “Has Yahweh as much delight in burnt
offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of Yahweh?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat
of rams.” 1 Samuel 15:22**

**[Jesus said,] “He who has My commandments and keeps them
is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by
My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”
John 14:21**
- In our adoration:
**He said, “I love You, O Yahweh, my strength.”
Yahweh is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
I call upon Yahweh, who is worthy to be praised,
And I am saved from my enemies. Psalm 18:1–3**
- In our witness:
**“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may
see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”
Matthew 5:16**

Not only are God and His Christ glorified when we live out our faith in such a way, thus validating His reason for creating us, but our righteous behavior then witnesses to those not yet part of Him. When *they* come to faith as a result, God is again glorified in their repentance.



Believers are an expression of God’s glory. Just as Isaiah was overwhelmed by the fullness of His glory, so too individuals on earth can be overwhelmed—or at least impressed or influenced—by the expression of that glory in the lives and behavior of believers.

And so it goes—on and on.

Next week: Verse 1

glorified as a Redeemer

Beyond this, and presenting a bit of a paradox, is that God is glorified *as a result of man's sin*. Precisely how? It is God's *redemption* of fallen man that demonstrates that He is a God of grace and love. He redeemed Israel from Egypt, and He redeemed believers at the cross. He is glorified as a god of grace, forgiveness, and love because of His redemption of fallen, sinful believers. (See Psalms 71:23; 107:1-2; Isaiah 51:11; Romans 3:21-26; Ephesians 1:7, 13-14; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.) This, then, answers the perennial question, “Why does God permit sin?” Because He is glorified in His response to it; just as Yahweh was glorified in His forbearance and longsuffering with Israel's sin, He is glorified in His demonstration of grace, mercy, longsuffering, and forgiveness toward us.

SESSION 3

Why Creation? Part Two

From Brown's *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*

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Creation is intended to glorify its Maker (**Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20; Psalm 145:10-12**).

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Because God esteems Himself as highest, He is pleased—and glorified—by our high esteem of Him (**Psalm 24:7-10; Psalm 9:1-2; 1 Samuel 15:22; John 14:21; Psalm 18:1-3**).

He is glorified as a Redeemer: **Psalms 71:23; 107:1-2; Isaiah 51:11; Romans 3:21-26; Ephesians 1:7, 13-14; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20**.

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