

### **The Glory of God Has Returned**

The glory of God is not just a word picture of God's greatness. It's a reality. It's a physical manifestation of God Himself. God's glory appears multiple times in Scripture and it always verifies God's presence. For example, in Exodus 40, after Moses set up the Tabernacle exactly as Jehovah had instructed him, listen to what happened: [Show Tabernacle in the Wilderness slide]

**Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. (Ex. 40:34, 35)**

Can you imagine seeing that? Wow! What an experience! Then, 500 years later, after Solomon finished building the Temple, the same thing happened. [Show "Glory of God is Coming" slide]

**When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. The priests could not enter the temple of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled it. When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying,**

**"He is good;  
his love endures forever." (II Chron. 7:1-3)**

Again, what a powerful experience. But, after another 400 years which included decades of disobedience and rebellion against God, Ezekiel witnessed the unthinkable – the withdrawal of God's glory from the Temple Mount. Listen:

**Now the glory of the God of Israel went up from above the cherubim, where it had been, and moved to the threshold of the temple. The cloud filled the temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the LORD. Then the glory of the LORD departed from over the threshold... (Ezek. 9:3; 10:4, 18)**

The people were exiled to Babylon and though they were allowed to return seventy years later and even permitted to rebuild the Temple, the Glory of the Lord never returned. Never. So today, Jews who reject Jesus as their Messiah are still waiting for the Messiah to come to bring the glory of God back. Devout Jews pray three times a day that the Messiah will return and re-establish a glory-filled temple. Which brings us to the question, "Did Jesus fulfill this expectation of the Jewish Messiah?"

Over the next eight months, we're going to study the Gospel of John. This gospel is different from the other three. The first three have a lot of similarities but essentially they all do one thing, they major in describing the *events* in the life of Jesus. John emphasizes the *meaning* of these events.<sup>1</sup> In the first chapter, John

records seven names or titles for Jesus. These names give us His 'meaning': who Jesus is and why He came. Today we will examine only the first three names. The first name is...

### **I. Jesus Is the Eternal Word.**

In verse one John declares:

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.** (John 1:1-2)

Now, some, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, have argued that this isn't talking about Jesus but someone else. In fact, they believe that this is referring to Michael the archangel. Unfortunately, they do this by altering the text. They add the word "a" in the last phrase of the first sentence so their translation reads, "...and the Word was a god." There is absolutely no justification for doing this. They are editing the Word of God which Jesus Himself says will be severely punished in Rev. 22:18. So, if you have a discussion with a Jehovah's Witness, don't let him read from his Bible. It's been tampered with.

But what's the significance of saying that Jesus was "the Word"? Well, what are words used for? They're used to communicate a message, to reveal a truth, to tell a story. And who's doing the communicating? God is. And who is He communicating with? US!!! And in the next several verses, we learn that Jesus is uniquely qualified to be the Word for several reasons. First, He's eternal. The phrase "*In the beginning was the Word...*" doesn't mean that Jesus had a beginning, but that at OUR beginning, He already existed. So, Jesus is uniquely qualified to tell God's story because He's seen it all.

Secondly, He's the Creative Word. Verse three tells us:

**Through him (The Word, Jesus) all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.** (John 1:3)

If you have a problem with a kitchen appliance, whom would you rather talk to – the person who designed and created it or the guy at Home Depot who sold it to you? When you pray to Jesus about your life or your relationships or this crazy world we live in, you are speaking with the One who created it all. "...without him nothing was made that has been made." (v. 3) When you've got a problem, talk to the Designer!

Thirdly, Jesus is the "Word made flesh." Verse 14 says:

**The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.**

Throughout the early centuries of Christianity, there was a huge debate on the question, "What was the nature of Christ?" Was He 50% man and 50% God? Was He really all spirit and just looked like He had a body? Was He an angel? What was His nature?

Through diligent searching of the Scriptures, their final conclusion is what is described by the theological term "**the hypostatic union.**" In simple words this means that Jesus had two natures, one human and one divine. But these two natures are inseparably united without mixture or loss of separate identity. Jesus remains forever fully God and fully man. I think of it this way, He's the only 200% person – 100% God and 100% man.

Now, why is this important? I mean, who cares? Well, it's important only IF you want to have your sins forgiven. If you don't care about being forgiven, then this is no big deal, but if you do care – then this is crucial. Here's why. In the system of

justice that God set up, all evil (sin) has to be paid for. All of it. The only way to pay for human sin is for a human to die. *“Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.”* (Heb. 9:22) But if you die in your sin, you go to hell. There’s no second chance. Do you see our dilemma?

However, God also created one loophole in the law. If a totally innocent man died, his innocence could be transferred to others by something called faith. But there’s a catch; no human being will ever die innocent because, since Adam and Eve, we’re actually “BORN guilty.” Ps. 51:5:

**Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.**

So, do you see it? There is only one person who ever was or ever will be able to save you from your guilt, to keep you from going to hell. It’s the 200% person, Jesus Christ. His divine nature kept Him innocent. His human nature qualified His death as payment for your sin. If, by faith, you accept His death as your death to sin, you are saved. No one else, no other religious leader, no other “version” of Jesus can do it. Only Jesus is the eternal “Word made flesh.” Only He can save you.

The next title for Christ in this chapter says...

## **II. Jesus Is the Light.**

We’re calling this study of the Gospel of John, “The Gospel of Life.” That’s because this concept of life is mentioned 36 times in this book. What elements are necessary for human life? There are four: light, air, water and food. John says Jesus is all of these. Light provides a number of benefits for us as humans. First, it dispels darkness. It makes it possible for us to see. Our eyes are literally light receptors. Secondly, light is necessary for living things to grow whether they are plants or animals.

Have you ever thought about this? Do you have any idea what would happen if you had to live with no light whatsoever? How long could you last in pitch blackness? Several studies show that you wouldn’t make it past two days. Seriously. The most recent study was done in England in 2008. Six volunteers agreed to live in separate small rooms for just 48 hours. They could eat and sleep and walk around but they would have no communication with anyone and it would be pitch black. Adam, aged 37, thought he’d do just fine.

In the absence of a watch or sunlight, however, he quickly lost track of time. Within a few hours he fell asleep but when he woke up, he had no idea how much time had passed. Eating meals didn’t help him reset his clock, so he quickly lost his appetite. At about the twelve-hour mark, he started singing but then burst into tears. Adam said, “I can’t remember the last time I cried, and I felt my emotions were beginning to run out of control.”

Eighteen hours in, he started becoming paranoid. “I found myself suspecting the whole experiment was a trick... I knew I was being ridiculous, because setting it up took months... but I couldn’t shake the sense of paranoia,” he said. Thirty hours in, he began pacing around the room like an animal in a zoo. After 40 hours, he began to hallucinate. He saw a pile of 500 oyster shells. He said, “I could see the pearly sheen on the oyster shells as clear as day.” Then, he said, “I felt as though the room was taking off from underneath me. For the first time, I realized that the lack

of stimulation was driving me close to insanity. I felt nothing but numbness, as though I were losing the will to live.”

The other volunteers had almost identical experiences. Adam did make it through, but his final words were even more fascinating. He said, “When we arrived at the experiment site, I thought it was all rather bleak. The exterior was all overgrown and an eyesore. But when I left after the 48 hours, I noticed how green the grass was, how blue the sky was and hundreds of yellow buttercups. It was staggeringly beautiful... I made a vow that I would never not notice and appreciate my surroundings again.”<sup>ii</sup>

Another theme in this gospel is the battle between light and darkness. God is light (I John 1:5) and Satan is “the power of darkness.” (Lk. 22:53) Which power is controlling your life right now? Listen to what John says about Jesus again:

**In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.** (John 1:4, 5, 9-10) NIV 2011

In the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit comes to every believer as “tongues of fire.” But I Thess. 5:19 warns us not to quench the fire of the Spirit. How do you quench, put out a fire? You stop feeding it. You pour water on it. Or, you neglect it. As a Christian, do you find yourself living in darkness? There’s only one cause – you’ve quenched the fire of the Spirit. Feed it, don’t quench it. Our last name of Christ is...

### **III. Jesus Is the Only Son of God.**

First, we must notice that the term “Son” is not denying Christ’s divinity. Again, some cults have tried to make this argument. But here in this first chapter, that argument is disproved. Look at verse 18. Let me read it to you directly and literally from the Greek. I’m not changing the word order or anything. It reads:

*God no man has seen never; the only begotten God the one being in the bosom of the Father, that one declares him.* (The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament)

The phrase “*only begotten God*” is from two Greek words and is translated in the newest NIV translation as “*the one and only Son, who himself is God.*” The Greek word for “Son” actually doesn’t appear in the Greek, but obviously that is the meaning of ‘*only begotten.*’ The emphasis, though, is on “God,” not “son.”

Secondly, we need to see John’s explanation of the meaning of this Son of God coming to earth. We find it clearly explained in the ministry of John the Baptist in verse 14. It reads:

**The Word (Jesus) became flesh and made his dwelling among us.**

The Greek word translated “*made his dwelling*” is *eskanosen*. It literally means “tabernacled” among us. Okay? Remember He “tabernacled” among us. It then says:

**We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.** (John 1:14b) NIV 2011

Where did the glory of God first appear to all the people of Israel? Wasn’t it at the Tabernacle? And where did it last appear? Wasn’t it in the Temple when Ezekiel saw it depart? And what were the Jews waiting for in Jesus’ day? They were waiting

to see the glory of God return, to “tabernacle” with them again. What did the shepherds see out in the field the night Jesus was born? What did they specifically see?

**An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.** (Luke 2:9)

Yeah, I bet they were! And then what happened?

**Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”** (Luke 2:13, 14)

And John says in this first chapter that, “*We have seen his glory...*” In other words, in Jesus the Glory of God had returned! But wait. Why didn’t everyone see it, like when the glory came to the Temple?

In John 9, a man born blind is healed by Jesus. The Pharisees investigate the healing but because Jesus healed him on the Sabbath, they say he was desecrating the Sabbath and, therefore, is a sinner. They then attack the formerly blind man, accuse him of conspiring with a sinner and excommunicate him from the synagogue. Jesus goes and finds the man. He asks him:

**...Do you believe in the Son of Man? Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.** (John 9:35, 38)

Then Jesus says:

**...For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.** (John 9:39)

This is what John is referring to in chapter 1 when he says: (John 1:10, 12) **He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God –**

Do you see the importance of praying for your friends who don’t yet believe? They are spiritually blind. They need Jesus to open their eyes. You can’t do it! Jesus can. If you don’t ask Jesus to do it, who will?

A great encouragement to me is the increasing number of prayer cards you’re submitting. And also, more and more of you are asking for prayer for a friend or relative who isn’t yet a follower of Christ. What a great step of faith! Now, let me invite you to join us on Tuesday night as we pray through all these cards. You don’t need to be a seasoned pray-er. In fact, together we’re studying a book entitled *The Battle Plan for Prayer*. We’ll study a few pages each week, then we’ll put it into practice, praying through all the cards. We’ll meet in room 110 at 6:30 each Tuesday night and be done by the time all the other ministries are concluded. If the Holy Spirit is tugging at your heart, you’re welcome to join us.

In John 17 Jesus is praying for you and me. He prays:

**...I pray also for those who will believe in me through their (the apostles) message... I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me.** (John 17:20, 22, 23a)

II Cor. says that your body is the temple of God. So, the glory of God has returned to the temple by the Spirit living in you. If you have His glory, you’ll also have a burning

passion to be unified with others who also have it. The glory has returned. Are you feeding it or quenching it? Let's pray...

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<sup>i</sup> These two truths are from Warren Wiersbe's commentary on John entitled, "Be Alive," e-book, screen 1 of Part 9, David C. Cook

<sup>ii</sup> Natasha Courtenay-Smith, "Losing your mind: What happens during 48 hours in a pitch black bunker," Daily Mail.com, Jan. 22, 2008