

The Glorification of Christ

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While preparing for this lesson, I became struck with the question, “how could the Christ, who was already glorious become ‘glorified’?” Then, whether by the providence of God or by simple chance (God knows) we began in our mid-week Bible class to study the book of Philippians – and there I found the answer, an answer which we’ll dedicate some time to this hour.

Jesus has been referred to, in the Bible, as the son of God and the son of man. He wasn’t, however, always a son either of God or of man (Old Testament references are prophetic: Son of God – Daniel 3:25: Son of man – Numbers 23:19; Daniel 7:13). Instead the Holy Spirit has identified the Christ before his incarnation, before his “humanization” as “the Word” (cf. John 1:1-14). And he retains this name still today (1 John 5:7), but with the additional titles as Son, Christ, Savior, and King. Furthermore we know (again because the Holy Spirit revealed it) that the Word, who was always God, emptied himself of that glory for the purpose of redeeming men (Philippians 2:5-11). It is this glory which Jesus was missing when he uttered the real Lord’s Prayer: “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” (John 17:5)

How was Christ Glorified? In our lesson today, we’ll recognize three degrees of glory that He received.

Glory as a Man

Jesus came to earth as a man. From Genesis chapters 1 and 2 we know that man is the pinnacle of God’s creative work! And man was glorified in creation. Made in the image of God, and crowned with glory and honor. This glory and honor comes in the form of having been given dominion and power over all of the rest of creation. As we read in Psalm 8:4-6,

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.

This is glorious! But this glory pales infinitely in comparison to the glory our Lord had enjoyed before becoming a man.

Even as a man, among men, he was not glorified (in society); or perhaps better stated, he wasn’t recognized by other men as glorious. Isaiah prophesied concerning Jesus that, “he has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is

despised and rejected by men..." (Isaiah 53:2-3). In hindsight, this seems almost absurd considering what we now know about Jesus. Nevertheless, it was the sad reality of his life.

Jesus Also Received Glory as the Only Begotten Son of God

John declared, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:14).

In one sense, every person is a child of God for in Acts 17:29 Paul refers to man as the "offspring of God". However, Jesus was the "only begotten Son" (John 3:16). In a most literal, physical sense, Jesus was the "son of God" (Luke 1:30-35; Matthew 1:18-23). His was the miraculous conception, as his mother remained a virgin until after he was born (Matthew 1:24-25).

The gospel record is given by four inspired men, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Three of these men were eye witnesses of Jesus' ministry. The fourth account (Luke's) fully corresponds although there is no record of his ever having met the three apostles who wrote the other gospels. This is a wonder which testifies to inspiration of God and eliminates any room for accusations of a conspiracy. Their testimony is sufficient to convince every reasonable person of the veracity of Jesus' incredible life. In these gospel accounts, we are introduced to the marvelous Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, born of a virgin in the city of David, of the royal lineage both legally (through His supposed father Joseph) and literally (through His mother Mary), during the time of the Roman empire, having a forerunner in the prophet John, rejected by Jewish leaders, unjustly executed and resurrected on the third day. These are among the many amazing truths which had been prophesied about Jesus in remarkable detail hundreds of years before he was born.

Furthermore, from the time of his baptism, the Holy Spirit was given to Jesus as John the Baptist declared "without measure" (John 3:34). He then provided innumerable evidences of His deity, of His being the Son of God and the promised messiah. Jesus was truly glorified through this gift from His Father (John 10:24-25, 37-38). Near the conclusion of his account, John proclaimed, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:30-31).

And his deeds were convincing! Some of the people wanted to make Jesus their king (John 6:14-15)! You see to those Jews, just as with most people today, honor was measured according to the flesh. And what higher honor could there be than being made "king"? On the other hand, what honor is there in being executed as a criminal? On one occasion after Jesus announced that he would be "lifted up" the people commented, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up?" (John 12:34). Even the apostle Peter had trouble with this (Matthew 16:21-23).

From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee

behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

When the Jewish leaders finally decided that Jesus had to die, John 12:10-11 reveals that they also determined to kill Lazarus in an attempt to undo one of His most celebrated miracles. They could see no other way to keep the common people from being persuaded. But their disbelief is really astonishing, and begs the question, “Just how blind does one have to be in order to maintain such an irrational lack of faith?”

Of course, it was in God’s plan and it suited his purpose for leaders to remain blind to these truths until after Jesus died (John 9:39; Matthew 11:25-26). Writing to the church in Corinth, Paul contrast the wisdom of the world with God’s wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:18-31). Then in chapter 2:1-8 of the same letter, we learn why Paul was determined to keep his message simple, “Jesus Christ and Him crucified”. The power of this message is mysterious, that somehow there is glory and honor in Christ’s having died on the cross. In verses 7-8, we read “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

If old Satan had understood these things, he would have attempted another approach. In Revelation 12:1-5, we find that vivid description of Satan trying to defeat God’s plan by destroying his son. But you see, in so doing, he actually fulfilled God’s plan and the then glorified child was carried up to heaven! This worked because sacrifice is at the core of righteousness before God, and Jesus’ purpose for coming was to make the ultimate sacrifice for sin!

Glory as the Resurrected Savior

In raising Lazarus from death, Jesus prompted the long awaited sequence of events that finally led to his own crucifixion, for it was at this time the leaders determined that he must be eliminated. Let’s read from John chapter 11 (John 11:4, 47-53). And then of course, Judas’ actions brought Christ’s glorification still nearer (John 13:31-32).

But why use the word “glorification”? What’s glorious about dying like a criminal on the Roman cross? Well the glory isn’t in the death, but in what lay beyond that death. In order to understand, we need to take another look at the main text for our lesson.

“And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:23-24)

If we consider a seed, it appears to be so simple and plain to the eye. And taken alone, it’s really pretty useless. One grain wouldn’t satisfy anyone’s hunger or provide enough nutrition to sustain a person for even a day. There is nothing glorious about abiding alone. There’s nothing particularly glorious about germination (referred to here as “dying”) or the spreading of roots. It is only what follows, a plant bearing fruit, that reveals the true value and beauty of the lonely seed!

Jesus dying upon the cross alone does not reveal his glory. It is only in the context of what resulted from his death that one can see the glory. So what was the result? What was the “fruit” of Jesus’ sacrifice?

- *Fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and purpose:*
 - Acts 13:29 “And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.”
 - John 12:16 “...when Jesus was glorified...then they remembered the things that were written of him”
 - Colossians 2:14-15, “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”

- *Giving of the Holy Spirit*
 - “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” (John 7:37-39)
 - To his apostles Jesus gave this promise: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...” (John 16:13a)
 - Now we have the living and powerful word of God’s New Covenant with man, complete and unchangeable giving knowledge of God, knowledge of Christ and the offer of eternal life to all people.

- *Purchasing the church of Christ*
 - In Acts 20:28, in his address to the elders of the Ephesus church of Christ, Paul declared that Christ “purchased the church with his own blood.”
 - And in this church of priests (1 Peter 2:5), Christ has been given the office of high priest forever! “So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” (Hebrews 5:5-6)

- *Atonement for sins*
 - Romans 5:6, “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”
 - Romans 5:9-10, “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

Jesus had said, “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” (John 12:31-32). Remember, in

our text, he said, unless the seed falls to the ground and dies it will abide alone! Jesus was successful because he accomplished the redemption of men's souls! Jesus said in Matthew 16:27-28,

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

Then again in Matthew 19:28, he pointed out that he would sit on the throne of his glory "in the regeneration".

Peter said,

The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. (Acts 3:13-15).

Since his resurrection, Christ has been sitting on the throne of glory! And he'll continue to reign there until the appointed time of the end. Concerning the resurrection from the dead, first of Christ and then of all men, Paul commented in 1 Corinthians 15:24, "then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." Christ's glory was NOT in his death. It was obtained THROUGH his death and realized in his resurrection; it was seen in his casting down of Satan; and it continues in the redemption of men from the perils of sin.

Jesus had two very enlightening conversations in Luke 24. Luke 24:15-27 [walking in the way with some of the disciples]; 44-47 [after eating in the room with disciples including the 11 apostles].

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:8-11)

The world may not appreciate the glory God has given to every man as the pinnacle of creation; the world may close it's eyes to the man Jesus, the son of a Jewish carpenter whose deeds amazed his peers; but try as it may, the world cannot ignore the one who conquered sin, who conquered death and who offers eternal life to every creature under heaven. And why not? Because even disbelievers will be raised from death to be judged by Jesus the Christ!

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10; see also John 5:26-29).

This is the glory that Jesus sought. Willingness to sacrifice all – from the original glory he possessed before coming to earth as a man; to the rejection and humiliations he experienced as a man; and even to the false accusations and unjust execution on the cross; Jesus was willing to give all in order to share glory with those who love him. Don't be like many who ignore or abandon Christ, and in so doing, "...crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:6). Instead, let all of us who hear the lesson today recognize and honor Christ for the glory he has received! Let us follow him into that glory through obedience to his will in baptism for the remission of sins; in association with his people, the undefiled church of Christ; and through the imitation of his humility and sacrificial service. In this way we lift Christ up as God has lifted him up.

Christ's glory is realized when you share in that glory. Will you honor Christ today? Will you let him share his glory with you throughout eternity? The choice is yours! God has planned your salvation; Christ has purchased your salvation; The Spirit and the bride of Christ (his church) invite you to that salvation. Fulfill God's plan and acknowledge Christ's glory today.