

## Created for Glory (Part One)

*We must behold glory now in order to safely reach glory*

By Jay Wegter

***Beholding the glory of the Lord must begin now if we are to safely reach our heavenly home. That is the premise of this article.*** “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18).

Beholding is our calling, it transforms us, it is our blessed requirement and privilege to behold so that we might become equipped to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9-10). We must know the benefits of beholding the glory of the Lord—understanding what happens to us when we behold penultimate virtue as we gaze upon Christ exalted in our human nature. We are incrementally changed into His likeness (2 Cor 3:18). When we consistently behold, our desire to imitate our Savior will be compelling. It is impossible to continually behold this glory and remain the same person.

***How the church needs the regular revelation of the glory of Christ.*** For in gazing by faith upon the exalted Lord in the Scriptures we behold our *forerunner* who is preparing a place for us, and who will receive us unto Himself (Jn 14:1-3; Heb 6:18-20). In beholding we see the goal of our existence—to glorify God by enjoying Him forever. We see the God-man, the source of our eternal life, purpose, calling, and destiny. We see previews of the weight of glory to come (2 Cor 4:17-18). We gain insights into what ‘the heavenly man’ really is (1 Cor 15:46-49), for Christ is the prototypical glorified human—the ‘first fruits’ of all who await resurrection in Him (1 Cor 15:20-24).

Our man in glory is the *eschaton* (last) Adam (1 Cor 15:45) who represents His people before the throne of God. He has unbreakable solidarity with His people. The destiny of the saints is wrapped up in Him; they are mystically united to Him (Rom 6:5ff.). As we behold His glory, we gain glimpses into the infinite might of our Champion, our Overcomer who is taking us from dust to glory (Jn 6:39-40).

***Seeing all of life clearly from the perspective of beholding glory is a vantage point like no other. First and foremost, it is rectifying activity that instills eternal values.*** Beholding is how we grow and cultivate a ‘divine viewpoint’. Beholding develops a passion for the glory of God. Beholding is how we gain a soul-entranced vision of God.

By nature, beholding the glory of the Lord is utterly foreign to us, for the ability to behold God’s glory was lost in the fall (Rom 3:23). Since Adam, our bent is to take man’s side, not God’s side. We prefer victimhood rather than contrition over sin. To be able to take God’s side against our sin, corruption, and rebellion is entirely a work of grace.

Apart from that work of grace, natural carnal reason opts for a finite god (the knowledge of whom may be attained by human reason). But, by contrast, where the Spirit of God effectually convicts and calls, a man will be confronted with the trauma of the one true God who is transcendent in holiness. God’s self-revelation in Holy Scripture breaks every grandfatherly

stereotype, for He is the immortal invisible Almighty One who dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim 6:14-15). His throne is ablaze with flames (Dan 7:9-10).

***God is a consuming fire (Heb 12:29), it is impossible to contemplate God as He truly is apart from Christ, the 'refuge of His people' (Heb 6:18).*** In the book of Exodus, we read of Moses who was permitted to view but a portion of the glory of God from the safety of a split rock. This prefigures Christ, the 'Rock' split (crucified) in order to 'hide' His people (Ex 33:21-23; 1 Cor 10:4). The believer's safety in Christ functions somewhat like an observatory. From the protection of our union with Him who made atonement for us, we gaze in awe upon the majesty and perfections of the Godhead.

When drawing near to God, our vantage point, or 'observatory' of security is the robe of righteousness with which Christ has clothed His people (Is 61:10; Gal 3:27; Phil 3:9). From our refuge in the Lamb of God we are able to love God, worship God, revere God, and fear God (Ps 31:19). For, the fear of God is His due (Ps 29:2; 90:11). And oh, there is much in Him that inspires reverential fear. For God is glorious in judgment as well as in grace—a theme that cannot even be adequately contemplated unless one is hidden in His Son (Rom 9:22-24). For, God will ultimately, like a furnace consume everything that is not like Him in holiness (Heb 10:27; 12:29). What a far cry this is from the benign, congenial god of so many pulpits today.

***An entranced vision of God begins with seeing God as He is revealed in His Word and seeing ourselves in light of His self-revelation (Ps 139).*** By 'entranced' we mean much more than entertaining or holding to a 'god concept'. No, an entranced vision of God takes possession of the whole man. It generates an experience of both delight and trauma, of both wonder and repentance, and of both affection and reverential awe. This sets up a line of sight in which our utter dependency upon the Lord begins to stagger us and knock us off balance. When the sinner is first confronted with the gospel in the hands of the Spirit it creates a kind of crisis. Self is dethroned, our imagined sovereignty is demolished and we are cast down as ruined wretches.

Seeing God as He truly is, also involves some inkling of understanding of Romans 11:32-36—that 'from Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things'. Beholding the glory of the Lord places the creature in the dust; this is reprehensible to our natures; it is the major reason we neglect beholding. Only the godly enjoy being 'small' in the presence of the infinite One.

***How did our flight from God begin? It started with the ancient lie in Eden which produced a tear, a chasm in the soul of man. Spiritual darkness rushed into that void. Like a steel wedge, the ancient lie cleaved apart man's perception of God's glory and man's good operating together.*** Once the lie was believed, and acted upon, and formalized by eating the forbidden fruit, it produced blindness to the glory of God.

Now the lie serves as a tool and weapon of Satan to intensify bondage to sin and the fear of death (Heb 2:14-15). Presently the lie dominates the human condition; it could be expressed as a riddle for Adam's race: "How could God do all things for His glory and at the same time have the best interest of sinners in mind?" "In other words, how can God the Judge extend His glory, and at the same time be infinitely good and loving to sinners?" It appears impossible that divine justice and mercy should 'hold hands'.

*The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the answer to the riddle. The boundless wonder of divine love and mercy is that God is glorifying His grace in the recovery of sinners (Eph 1:5-12). “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Ps 85:10). The Son fulfills all righteousness on behalf of His people by voluntarily taking on their nature in order to redeem, and win and woo His Bride; what a great mystery:*

By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness:

He who was revealed in the flesh,  
Was vindicated in the Spirit,  
Seen by angels,  
Proclaimed among the nations,  
Believed on in the world,  
Taken up in glory (1 Tim 3:16).

Christ is God’s ‘mystery’—all the treasures of God’s wisdom and knowledge reside in Him (Col 2:2). For Christ and Him crucified is the solution to the riddle (1 Cor 2:2). In Christ, God’s glory and our rescue are accomplished together. In the Son, God becomes known as “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom 3:26).

The gospel proclamation that Christ has been sacrificed for the guilty has the power to pluck from the heart of a man that massive poisonous thorn of original sin. Our condition in Adam is one of hostility, craven fear, rebellion, and suspicion toward God (Col 1:21). This is the moral and spiritual state of every child born into this present darkness.

*Divine glory in the face of Christ crucified is the light that expels enmity from the darkened sinner’s heart. The cross of Christ addresses the lie, the darkness, and riddle ‘head on’.* In our Savior’s Person and work, God’s glory and our good are accomplished together so that the wedge is removed and the riddle is solved. Of all the things God could do to bring glory to Himself, whether forming a myriad of glorious angels or calling a fathomless cosmos into existence, or directing the greatest and smallest providences in history, or designing the boundless beauty of plants and animals—the greatest manifestation of His glory is the recovery of sinners through Christ (Rev 5:9-10).

*This is a love story to overshadow all other love stories. For, Christ voluntarily assumes our nature in order to assume all the liabilities of His bride: her alienation, wrath, guilt, death, condemnation and suffering.* This incredible vicarious work on her behalf is the measure of His love for her and the infinite price necessary to make her His forever (Eph 5:25-27; 1 Jn 4:10; Rev 1:5). The divine ‘glory story’ of a crucified and risen Savior is how Christ reveals God to blinded sinners, restoring their ability to behold glory. It is how the sinner is disarmed of his hostility toward God (Col 1:19-20). This glory story is an ‘unfinished love poem’ which will not be complete until the Bride for Christ is in the nuptial chamber with her loving King. This glory story works on a man from the inside out—it is the abundant life spoken of in John 10:10—the fountain in the soul springing up unto eternal life (Jn 4:14)].

*Dear reader, has this glory story been indelibly written upon your heart by the Spirit? Do you long to have this glory story written there in a more captivating way? Do you find your*

spiritual eyes straining to see this vision more clearly? Do you bring this story to your imagination? Do you meditate upon this glory story and stand in awe and delight that God has placed you in His plot? This kind of response is necessary if you are to make it through this life without being hamstrung by the iron-fisted idols of this world.

Do you desire to have a deeper impression of this glory story etched upon your own heart? Then, your loyalty to Christ must go deeper—beholding His glory must become your vocation. Pray for a spirit of wisdom and understanding in regard to Him (Eph 1:17-18). Dare to draw near through the ‘new and living way’—through the flesh of Christ offered for you (Heb 10:19-22). Take joy in obedience and make no provision for sin in regard to its lusts (Rom 13:14). Pant after God—believing He desires to meet with you (Ps 42:1). Long for greater views of the King in His beauty (Ps 24; 45; Is 33:17). Do not settle for anything less than an entranced vision of God. For, nothing less than beholding the glory of the Lord has the power to transform you and transport you. Refuse to settle for spiritual stagnancy and unfruitfulness.

***Beholding the glory of the Lord is our primary calling now. To behold the glory of the Lord in His Word is how we grow in our knowledge of God (2 Pet 3:18).*** It is how we consolidate and review our true treasure. It is how the communal life of the Trinity is imported into our experience. To adore Christ and be loyal to Him now involves bearing His reproach (Heb 13:13). Reproach can come in subtle ways: friends and relatives may infer that you are a bit eccentric in your devotion to Christ. Oh, how easy it is for your associates to talk this way when the rightful King of the cosmos is in a kind of ‘exile’.

When Christ came to earth, it was in partial disguise—He looked like any other mortal:

Who has believed our message?  
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?  
For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,  
And like a root out of parched ground;  
He has no *stately* form or majesty  
That we should look upon Him,  
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.  
He was despised and forsaken of men,  
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;  
And like one from whom men hide their face  
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him (Is 53:1-3).

Is it any wonder that He prayed in John 17:24 that His disciples would someday be able to behold His glory unmediated (no longer ‘in a mirror dimly’—1 Corinthians 13:12), but face-to-face—beholding the glory He had with the Father before the foundation of the world?

***Oh, consider the wonder, the mystery and the paradox of Christ. Who could have understood that the Creator and Upholder of the cosmos could bleed and die, and that the Lawgiver of the universe would consent to be murdered by His creatures.*** During His earthly ministry, only those called by the Spirit truly recognized Him (Jn 6:68-70). His credentials, origin and mission were from the Heavenly Father (Jn 6:39).

Yes, the Son of God is the rightful King; He is the perfect lover of God and people. He

obeyed His Father perfectly; He is the Leader with no will to power, the Shepherd of souls who lays His life down for His own. His rightful kingship is founded upon His authority as the One sent by His Father (Jn 12:44-50). His throne is a mediatorial kingship; He rules His subjects and He represents His subjects as their High Priest (Heb 7:25).

***Jesus of Nazareth came into an enemy occupied world, not finding one acre entirely devoted to God.*** Subjection to Him liberates His subjects from the cruel reign of sin and Satan, the wicked usurper (Jn 8:34-36). Christ Jesus, the rightful King has the power and intent to make all of His enemies a footstool for His feet (1 Cor 15:24-27; Heb 1:13; 10:13). Though all authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18) for the present, the rightful King is not physically amidst His people, but is in a kind of ‘exile’.

Loyalty to Christ, the ‘exiled’ rightful King will cost you a great deal now—you will have to ‘lose your life in order to find it’ (Mt 10:39; Jn 12:24-26). But, this self-denial and taking up of one’s cross daily is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving from the redeemed. They gladly embrace this obedience as their essential preparation for their Lord’s imminent return (Lu 9:24-26). Recognition of the rightful King and subjugation to Him now is the condition necessary to be reconciled to Him (Acts 10:42-43; Rom 10:9-10).

***Those who have seen His glory gladly submit to the King now, while He is in ‘exile’ (Acts 2:19-21). Bowing before the rightful King now, while He is away is how sinners are delivered from the dominion of Satan the usurper—the present ‘god of this world’.*** Christ promises He will receive every true believer unto Himself and will publicly recognize them as His own when He returns to occupy His rightful throne as Lord of the cosmos (Mt 10:32-33). Subjection to the rightful King is submission to God Himself (Jn 12:44-45). For, there is no loyalty to God without submission to the Son of God who is King (Acts 2:36). When He suddenly reinvades human history, He will return in blazing glory and separate the sheep from the goats (Mt 25:31-34ff.).

***The rightful King is like no other sovereign—He is both a King and a Priest; a Ruler and a Mediator. He gives His own blood to win a people and a Kingdom.*** During His earthly ministry and redemptive work, Christ was the ‘probationer’ for His people. He passed an infinitely harder test than Adam faced. He proved that He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness (Heb 2:8-9). By His obedience, He has won an eternal kingdom. He will put an end to the temporary kingdom of the usurper (the devil), and He will cast into the lake of fire all who have continued to follow the usurper (Rev 20:11-15).

Loyalty to the rightful King now is the only loyalty and faithfulness that God will recognize on judgment day (Lu 12:8-9). There is no reverence and respect for God Almighty without reverence and respect for the way of salvation that He has appointed (1 Jn 5:10).

***This world is filled with idols, snares, and traps. The only way to get through it successfully is to keep beholding the glory of God in the face of Christ. To finish well, to stand before the Son of Man, to hear ‘well done’, and enter the Kingdom of God, it will require that all of the faculties of one’s soul be involved.*** This is a far cry from mere mental assent to certain historical truths about the Son of God. In His *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Bunyan likened this present

world to a massive city of destruction facing imminent demolition. ‘Pilgrim’ (the believer) has fled the city in haste and is pressing on to the Celestial City with all of his might.

Not only are spiritual dangers external (as in false doctrine), they are internal as well. Calvin suggested that the heart of man is an idol factory. The apostle John ends his first epistle with encouragement and a warning about idolatry, “We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of* the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, guard yourselves from idols” (1 Jn 5:19-21).

When one considers what is at stake—the destiny of one’s eternal soul, the urgency in this endeavor of reaching heaven requires that our affections be fully engaged in our pursuit of knowing God (Hos 6:3-6). Illicit desires must be replaced with pure desires—Puritan Thomas Watson in speaking of the riches of God’s grace urged believers to ‘dig more gold’.

***God’s glory story; His redemptive plot must capture and fire the imagination if our desire for His glory is to control us.*** But, we are not used to bringing imagination to the holy things of God; created things more easily captivate our thoughts. We tend to bring our imagination to movies, books, drama, romance, sports, travel, and video games. But, a vivid imagination is in fact employed when we meditate on Scripture. The imagination has the power to project on the screen of the mind the worthiness of an object of desire. For example, when the Word commands us to ‘fix our eyes on Jesus’ (Heb 12:2), we are being exhorted to dwell upon the superlative example of Christ’s obedience to the Father—an obedience involving the most intense suffering—an obedience that purchased our salvation (Heb 12:3-5).

***God’s redemptive plot is a love story like no other. There are dimensions of love in this plot which require that the imagination be exercised and stretched.*** “Reckoning” the truth of redemption so that one’s affections are engaged requires the use of the mind’s eye. Believers are to squarely and thoughtfully place themselves in God’s glory story, in His redemptive plot so that their hearts are enlarged in love, and in eagerness for Christ’s return. “. . . looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” (Tit 2:13).

***The lusts of deceit fill this world (Eph 4:22). They continually make a play for one’s affections. Sin is a clever foe; it operates under camouflage. It works through the flesh—pretending to be a friend. Sin fights for your affections.*** Sin is a parasite that wants access to your soul’s faculties—it desires your heart for its own use and damning agenda. Sin has no independent existence—it needs a willing host to harbor it and to comply with its goal. Those same mental powers of imagination with which we are to dwell upon the Lord’s sublime glory are also capable of generating a fantasy of lustful enticement.

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death (Jas 1:13-15).

Spiritual battles are won or lost at the level of spiritual sight. Whether the area of conflict is in the area of disillusionment, cynicism, lustful temptation, trust, discouragement, or accusation—the fight is won by engaging the eyes of the heart to see the beauty of our King and His Kingdom. Victory by means of faith (spiritual sight) (1 Tim 1:18) involves displaying to the eyes of the heart our sonship, and our true treasure and inheritance in Christ (1 Pet 1:3-5).

***Humans were created to find their highest good, purpose, and pleasure in beholding the glory of their Creator. As the very image and likeness of God, humans were fashioned to behold the sublime. The sublime is another word to describe the staggering beauty of God's glory.*** The glory of God and the ache of the soul are made for each other. Saving faith is not a leap in the dark, it is the humble, happy sight of God's self-attesting glory in the Word made manifest in the gospel of Jesus Christ (John Piper, "A Peculiar Glory").

The sublime is awe-inspiring; it shows you something beyond yourself infinitely greater than yourself that takes you out of yourself. The ravishing power of this sublime glory transports us—off of self-concern, self-consciousness, self-protection and self-absorption. The sublime is so vast and sweeping in its majesty that it calls for the employment of all of the faculties and resources of a man or a woman (Grant Horner).

No wonder, presenting ourselves unconditionally back to God as a living sacrifice is our 'reasonable, rational, service of worship' (Rom 12:1b)—it is the only possible rational response to the sublime. Secularists are dying for the sublime, but don't know it. They have locked themselves in the dank and dark cave of naturalism. In that black prison, there is no transcendence (Ibid.). As a consequence, a plethora of idols which counterfeit the sublime are fashioned in the darkness.

***Our worshipping natures were created for the sublime; if the sublime glory of God is not displayed to us, we will look for the it elsewhere.*** The image of God was created for the sublime—if ministers and Christian leaders don't provide that, they cheat their hearers. True preachers will preach a sublime message about a sublime God. In this experience of beholding God's sublime glory is beauty, pleasure, purpose, sweetness, and relational love. Edwards called it 'sweet entertainment'. This enjoyment of God in the soul is essential to our Christian walk.

***Much of Evangelicalism has morphed into cultural Christianity because the sublime glory of Christ has not been consistently exhibited.*** What happens in our churches when Christian leaders call for submission to leadership and to the institution before there is a ravishing display God's sublime glory? You get institutionalism; you get the overshadowing of the priesthood of the believer; you get hierarchy (a clerical class); you get people converted to the church and not to Christ; you get hyper-structuralism and 'program-itis'; you get the church objectified as a value itself while forgetting who owns, enlivens, and rules it; you get the church existing to perpetuate itself; you get religious duty instead of delight; you get the management of human depravity by religion while church members look elsewhere for the sublime; you get increasingly bombastic, mood-altering, performance styles of worship; and you get celebrity pastors who grow their ministries around the popularity of their personality.

***Grace reclaims the image of God; grace has a goal—it is God’s plan to make us like Himself in holiness. Thus, our utilization of the means of grace is a shrewd revealer of our level of commitment to God’s redemptive plot.*** God’s plan to make His people like himself in holiness will manifest itself in the lives of true believers. True believers will demonstrate a consuming interest in knowing God, a passion for His holy character, a worshipful investigation into His redemptive plan, and a strong desire in receiving holiness from Him. Grace, glory and holiness form a unit; they are inseparably joined. Those who desire to receive holiness from God will make the sacrifices necessary to teach others what Christ has commanded. But, today’s cultural Christianity separates grace from its goal of conforming God’s people to Christ.

This is tragic. As R.C. Sproul has said, “The holiness of God is being systematically concealed from the Evangelical church.” Evangelicals are not being told that you cannot draw close to God and be of real use to Him without the constant mortification of sin. We must become like Him in holiness if we are to know Him intimately and experience fresh disclosures of His Person. He changes not; we must change and be changed. Beholding His glory is an essential part of this process of change (2 Cor 3:18; Cor 7:1).

***Jonathan Edwards got it right; true religion resides primarily in the affections. It has everything to do with what you love.*** The great blessing of receiving spiritual eyes and ears is not merely to feed off spiritual principles but to behold the glory of the Lord as His unveiled ones (Mt 13:16ff.; 2 Cor 3:18). The spiritual sight and savor for the glory of the Lord is the key to consecrated living. For, God’s glory story in Christ is a plot so compelling, the cosmos was created to be its stage. Beholding glory fits us for glory. The reverse is also true; for where there is no awe of God, there will be no lasting pursuit of holiness. Let us remember that beholding His glory for the first time is how the Lord saved us (2 Cor 4:6). Continuing to behold His glory is essential to our ongoing transformation (2 Cor 3:18), and seeing His glory face to face will someday glorify us in an instant (1 Jn 3:2).