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And Jehovah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; that they might go by day and by night: the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, departed not from before the people.

Exodus 13:21–22

INTRODUCTION

A. Definition

By way of definition, the Shechinah Glory is the visible manifestation of the presence of God. It is the majestic presence or manifestation of God in which He descended to dwell among men. Whenever the invisible God becomes visible, and whenever the omnipresence of God is localized, this is the Shechinah Glory.

B. Titles

The usual title found in the Scriptures for the Shechinah Glory is: *the glory of the Lord*. The Hebrew form is *Kvod Adonai*, which means “the glory of the Lord,” and describes what the Shechinah Glory is. The Greek title, *Doxa Kurion*, is also translated as “the glory of the Lord.” *Doxa* means “brightness,” “brilliance,” or “splendor” and it depicts how the Shechinah Glory appears.

Other titles give it the sense of “dwelling,” which portrays what the Shechinah Glory does. The Hebrew for Shechinah, from the root *shachan*, means “to dwell.” The Greek word *skeinei* means “to tabernacle,” and is derived from the Hebrew Shechinah.

**C. Forms**

As has been stated, the Shechinah Glory is the visible manifestation of the presence of God. In the Old Testament, most of these visible manifestations took the form of light, fire, cloud, or a combination of these. A new form appears in the New Testament: the Incarnate Word. At times it is closely associated with one or more of four elements: first, the Angel of Jehovah; secondly, the Holy Spirit; thirdly, the cherubim; and fourthly, the motif of thick darkness.

This study of the Shechinah Glory can be divided into three units. First, the Shechinah Glory in Old Testament history; secondly, the Shechinah Glory in New Testament history; and thirdly, the Shechinah Glory in prophecy.

**I. THE SHECHINAH GLORY IN OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY**

**A. The Garden of Eden**

Possibly, the first appearance of Shechinah Glory is found in *Genesis 3:8*: And they heard the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah God among the trees of the garden.

According to this verse, the first parents experienced the personal presence of God; there was a daily manifestation of God’s presence fellowshipping with them. No details are given, and whether or not this can, indeed, be called the first manifestation of the Shechinah Glory is impossible to answer. But the indication is that this was a manifestation of the Glory of God.

However, if it is not, then the first appearance of the Shechinah Glory is to be found in *Genesis 3:23–24*: therefore Jehovah God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

In Hebrew, the phrase and he placed has the root Shechinah and literally means “and he caused to dwell.” This was a visible dwelling of the presence of God that took the visible form of the flame of a sword. The definite article “the” makes it specific: the flame of a sword. Here was a visible manifestation of the Glory of God where the Shechinah appeared as fire.

Another point that should be noted here is that the Shechinah is associated with the Cherubim, one of four such associations.

**B. The Abrahamic Covenant**


While the content of the Abrahamic Covenant is found in several parts of the Book of Genesis, the sealing and signing of the covenant is in Genesis 15:12–18: And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that your seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. But you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full. And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces. In that day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto your seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

In verse 12, the motif of an unusual darkness in association with the Shechinah Glory appears for the first time. After summarizing the content of the Abrahamic Covenant in verses 13–16, it was signed in verse 17. God appeared in a visible form: a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch. Thus, it was by means of the Shechinah Glory that God signed the Abrahamic Covenant, which, in turn, became the basis of the three other unconditional covenants that God made with Israel: the Land Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant.

In addition to the Book of Genesis, the Shechinah Glory is also found in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. In the Book of Exodus, the Shechinah Glory took its residence with Israel and authenticated the Law of Moses. In the Book of Leviticus, it authenticated the Aaronic Priesthood. In the Book of Numbers, the Shechinah Glory rendered judgment for sin and disobedience.

**C. The Burning Bush**

The Shechinah Glory is found next in Exodus 3:1–5: Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Horeb. And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground.

God manifested Himself to Moses in a visible way in this passage. Verses 2–3 state what was visible: a flame of fire and a bush, burning with fire. Again, the fire motif is found in relationship to the visibility of the Shechinah Glory. Here the Shechinah Glory is associated with the angel of Jehovah, which, from a study of all related passages, is clearly the Second Person of the Trinity: Messiah Jesus, the Son of God.

That the flame of fire and the bush burning with fire was a manifestation of the Shechinah Glory becomes evident from Deuteronomy 33:16: And for the precious things of the earth and the fulness thereof, And the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, And upon the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

In Hebrew, the phrase: of him that dwelt in the bush reads: shochen sneh. The first word means “dwelling” and is from the same root that is found in the word Shechinah. Thus, it is the Shechinah that commissioned Moses to bring Israel from the land of Egypt.

**D. The Exodus**

During the Exodus, the Shechinah Glory appeared as the Pillar of Cloud by day and the Pillar of Fire by night. The Shechinah led Israel out of Egypt and into the wilderness in Exodus 13:21–22: And Jehovah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; that they might go by day and by night: the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, departed not from before the people.

A further ministry of the Shechinah Glory is added in Exodus 14:19–20: And the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud removed from before them, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud and the darkness, yet gave it light by night: and the one came not near the other all the night.

In this passage, the Shechinah Glory protected the Israelite camp from the Egyptians all night, because it separated the Egyptian army from the Israelites. Once again, the Shechinah Glory is associated with the Angel of Jehovah. Furthermore, it is associated with thick darkness, yet giving light within the thick darkness.

The Shechinah Glory provided Israel with the quail and the manna in Exodus 16:6–12: And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that Jehovah has brought you out from the land of Egypt; and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of Jehovah; for that he hears your murmurings against Jehovah: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? And Moses said, This shall be, when Jehovah shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that Jehovah hears your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against Jehovah. And Moses said unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before Jehovah; for he has heard your murmurings. And it came to pass, as Aaron spoke unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of Jehovah appeared in the cloud. And Jehovah spoke unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God.

In verse 7, the first occurrence of the actual title for the Shechinah Glory appears as it is found in the Scriptures: the glory of Jehovah. In verse 10, the Glory appeared and was revealed in the cloud, and this is another form of the visible Shechinah Glory.

**E. Mount Sinai**

The greatest manifestation of the Shechinah Glory during the time of the Exodus was at Mount Sinai, at the time of the giving of the Ten Commandments. Its initial revelation is in Exodus 19:16–20:

And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; and all the people that were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And Mount Sinai, the whole of it, smoked, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice. And Jehovah came down upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mount: and Jehovah called Moses to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.
In verse 16, there was the appearance of thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount; in verse 18, Jehovah descended upon it in fire; verse 20 shows that this was a visible manifestation of God’s presence, for it clearly states that Jehovah came down on Mount Sinai.

But such a manifestation of the presence of God put fear into the people. They saw the Glory of Jehovah at Mount Sinai and requested to hear the voice of God no more in Exodus 20:18–21: And all the people perceived the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they trembled, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak you with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before you, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

This factor is repeated in Deuteronomy 5:22–27: These words Jehovah spoke unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them upon two tables of stone, and gave them unto me. And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders; and ye said, Behold, Jehovah our God has showed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God does speak with man, and he lives. Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of Jehovah our God any more, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? Go you near, and hear all that Jehovah our God shall say: and speak you unto us all that Jehovah our God shall speak unto you; and we will hear it, and do it.

There is the presence of the Shechinah Glory at the time of the giving of the Tablets of the Law in Exodus 24:15–18: And Moses went up into the mount, and the cloud covered the mount. And the glory of Jehovah abode upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the appearance of the glory of Jehovah was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses entered into the midst of the cloud, and went up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

In verse 15, a cloud covered Mount Sinai; verse 16 states: the glory of Jehovah abode upon Mount Sinai. The Hebrew word for abode is vayishkhon, which contains the root of the word Shechinah. Verse 17 states: the appearance of the glory of Jehovah was like devouring fire. Here the Shechinah had the forms of cloud, fire, and light.

So in the Mount Sinai appearances of the Shechinah Glory, there are the forms of light, fire, cloud, lightning, and the motif of thick darkness, all of which are Old Testament visible manifestations of God’s presence.

F. The Special Manifestation of the Shechinah Glory to Moses

Moses received a very special revelation of the Shechinah Glory in response to his dramatic request in Exodus 33:17–23: And Jehovah said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that you have spoken; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name. And he said, Show me, I pray you, your glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of Jehovah before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And he said, You can not see my face; for man shall not see me and live. And Jehovah said, Behold, there is a place by me, and you shall stand upon the rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passes by, that I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and will cover you with my hand until I have passed by: and I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen.

In verse 18, Moses specifically requested to see God’s glory. In verse 23, God stated that Moses will be able to see the back parts, but will not be able to see God’s face. Dr. Dwight Pentecost feels that the word should be translated “afterglow.” In other words, God said to Moses that he will see His passing brilliance, but he will not see God as He really is. While the Hebrew word does not actually mean “afterglow,” the basic idea may be correct. Moses will not see God as He really is, but he saw a greater visible manifestation of God’s Glory than all previous manifestations. This was God’s promise to Moses.

The fulfillment of that promise is recorded in Exodus 34:5–9: And Jehovah descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of Jehovah. And Jehovah passed by before him, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation. And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. And he said, If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, let the Lord, I pray you, go in the midst of us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.

Here was another revelation of the Shechinah Glory of God in which the very Name of the Lord was proclaimed to Moses. Moses saw a new manifestation of God’s Glory which, up until then, no other man had seen. In verse 9, at the conclusion of this manifestation, Moses made a request for the continual dwelling of the Shechinah Glory in the midst of the people of Israel. It was a request God would partially answer when He took His abode in the Tabernacle, although Moses’ request for the eternal abiding could not be fulfilled at this time.

The experience of Moses in seeing a new visibility of God’s glory and a greater manifestation of God’s presence did not leave Moses untouched as Exodus 34:29–35 shows: And it came to pass, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of the testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses knew not that the skin of his face shone by reason of his speaking with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses spoke to them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that Jehovah had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. And when Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil upon his face. But when Moses went in before Jehovah to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and he came out, and spoke unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone: and Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

When the face of Moses shone, the Shechinah Glory was visible on his face. It was not the actual Glory of the Lord that manifested itself on Moses’ face, rather, Moses was reflecting the Glory that he had just seen. The relationship of Moses to the Shechinah was similar to the relationship of the moon to the sun. The light originates from the sun, and the moon simply reflects the light from the sun. In the same way, the face of Moses reflected the light that originated with the Shechinah Glory. The shining manifestation of the Glory of God permeated the person of Moses and manifested itself in the shining of his face. After the proclamation of the Law, Moses then veiled his face.

The reason for this veil is not given in the Book of Exodus, but it is explained in 2 Corinthians 3:12–18: Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness of speech, and are not as Moses, who put a veil upon his face, that the children of Israel should not look stedfastly on the end of that which was passing away: but their minds were hardened: for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains, it not being revealed to them that it is done away in Christ. But unto this day, whencesoever Moses is read, a veil lies upon their heart. But whencesoever it shall turn to the Lord,


the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.

Moses did not veil his face because Israel could not behold this reflected glory. On the contrary, Moses knew that the reflected glory was temporary, and he did not want Israel to see the fading away or the passing away of that reflection. The fact that the reflected glory on Moses’ face was temporary was being veiled from Israel.

G. The Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant

The purpose of the Tabernacle is given in Exodus 29:42–46: It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tent of meeting before Jehovah, where I will meet with you, to speak there unto you. And there I will meet with the children of Israel; and the Tent shall be sanctified by my glory. And I will sanctify the tent of meeting, and the altar: Aaron also and his sons will I sanctify, to minister to me in the priest’s office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am Jehovah their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them: I am Jehovah their God.

In verse 43, the Tabernacle was to be sanctified by the Shechinah Glory. In verse 45, the Tabernacle was for the purpose that God could dwell with the children of Israel. The Hebrew word for I will dwell has the same root as the word Shechinah.

Once the Tabernacle was finished, the Shechinah Glory made its residence within the Tabernacle according to Exodus 40:34–38: Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward, throughout all their journeys: but if the cloud was not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of Jehovah was upon the tabernacle by day, and there was fire therein by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

Verse 34 describes how the cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle. The Hebrew word for tabernacle is Hamishkhan and has the same root as Shechinah. Thus, the word tabernacle can also be translated as “the dwelling place of the Shechinah.” In verse 35, the cloud took its abode and dwelling with Israel. The word abode is a translation of the Hebrew word shachan, where once again the same root is found. Finally, in verses 36–38, this cloud led Israel through the Wilderness Wanderings.

On this occasion, the Shechinah Glory made its residence with Israel by making its abode in the Holy of Holies over the Ark of the Covenant and under the Cherubim. After the glory of Moses’ face faded, God manifested His Glory through the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle itself had no external beauty in that it was covered with weather-beaten animal skins, but God used the unattractive to reveal and manifest His Glory to Israel. The Holy of Holies had no window; it was absolutely dark and is referred to in other passages as “the thick darkness.” It was dark except for the shining of the Shechinah Glory. If one ever wondered how the high priest was able to perform his duties in the Holy of Holies in pitch blackness, the answer is that he had light as it was manifested through the shining of the Shechinah Glory.

H. The Book of Leviticus


During the Exodus, the Shechinah Glory authenticated the Law and eventually made its residence in the Holy of Holies. In the Book of Leviticus the Shechinah Glory authenticated those who had to carry out the practice of the Law and the Tabernacle; namely, the Aaronic Priesthood.

The key chapter is **Leviticus 9**. The promise of authentication is in verses 6–7: *And Moses said, This is the thing which Jehovah commanded that ye should do: and the glory of Jehovah shall appear unto you. And Moses said unto Aaron, Draw near unto the altar, and offer your sin offering, and your burnt offering, and make atonement for yourself, and for the people; and offer the oblation of the people, and make atonement for them; as Jehovah commanded.*

This is followed by the authentication by fire of the priesthood in verses 22–24: *And Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people, and blessed them; and he came down from offering the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of Jehovah appeared unto all the people. And there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: and when all the people saw it, they shouted, and fell on their faces.*

I. The Book of Numbers

In the Book of Numbers, the Shechinah Glory rendered judgment for sin and disobedience. This occurred on three occasions.

First, in **Numbers 13:30–14:45**, it was the Shechinah Glory that rendered judgment upon Israel at Kadesh Barnea when the people revolted against the rulership of Moses because of the discouraging report by ten of the twelve spies. This judgment sentenced the Tribes of Israel to wander in the wilderness for a period of forty years. In **Numbers 14:10**, the Shechinah Glory protected Moses and Aaron from stoning; and in **Numbers 14:22**, the reason for the severity of the judgment is given: *they saw my glory, yet they rebelled and would not believe.*

Secondly, the Shechinah Glory is seen in **Numbers 16:1–50** in connection with the rebellion of Korah. In verse 19, the Shechinah Glory authenticated the authority of Moses and rejected Korah. In verses 42–45, the Shechinah Glory sent out a plague among the people for murmuring over Korah’s death.

And thirdly, in **Numbers 20:6–13**, the Shechinah Glory appeared in the incident over the Waters of Meribah.

J. The Period of Joshua and the Judges

During this long period, the Shechinah Glory continued to dwell in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle and, apart from that, there were no special manifestations of the Shechinah Glory.

When the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant from Israel and brought it into Philistia, there was fear among the people that they had lost the visible manifestation of God’s presence, according to **1 Samuel 4:21–22**: *And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel; because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel; for the ark of God is taken.*

The name *Ichabod* means “the glory has departed.” Eli’s daughter-in-law was wrong, of course, for though the fear of it was certainly there, the Shechinah Glory had not yet departed from Israel at this time.

K. The Solomonic Temple

When Solomon built the First Temple, he also built a brand-new Holy of Holies. At this time, the Shechinah Glory was transferred from the Tabernacle to the Temple.

The key passage is 1 Kings 8:1–13, with a parallel passage in 2 Chronicles 5:2–7:3. In verses 1–9, the Ark of the Covenant was brought into the Holy of Holies; then the transfer of the Shechinah Glory took place in verses 10–13: And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of Jehovah, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of Jehovah filled the house of Jehovah. Then spoke Solomon, Jehovah has said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. I have surely built you a house of habitation, a place for you to dwell in for ever.

In verse 10, the cloud filled the house; in verse 11, the Glory of Jehovah filled the house. This is similar to what happened at the time that the Shechinah Glory made its abode in the Tabernacle in Exodus 40. In verse 12, the Shechinah Glory began to dwell in the thick darkness of the Holy of Holies. The phrase “to dwell” is a translation of the Hebrew word lishkhon, which is from the same root as Shechinah. In verse 13, the point is made that this was a house of habitation, a place for God to dwell in His visible manifestation as the Shechinah Glory. Like Moses before him, Solomon also prayed that the Shechinah Glory would dwell with Israel forever. But again, this was not a prayer God would answer at this time.

L. The Book of Ezekiel and the Departure of the Shechinah Glory

Historically speaking, the Shechinah Glory next appeared to Ezekiel in order to reveal its coming departure from Israel. That it was indeed the Shechinah Glory that was showing Ezekiel the revelation found in his book is seen in Ezekiel 1:28; 3:12, 23; and 8:3–4. In these passages, the Shechinah is always associated with the Cherubim as it was in the Garden of Eden, in the Tabernacle, and the Temple. It is also associated here with the Holy Spirit.

The Book of Ezekiel relates the departure of the Shechinah Glory, which left Israel reluctantly in four stages. The first stage of the departure was from the Holy of Holies—the first position—to the Threshold of the Door of the Temple—the second position. This is described in Ezekiel 9:3a: And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon it was, to the threshold of the house.

And again in Ezekiel 10:4: And the glory of Jehovah mounted up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of Jehovah’s glory.

The second stage of the departure of the Shechinah Glory occurred with the movement of the Shechinah from the Threshold of the Door of the Temple to the Eastern Gate—the third position—in Ezekiel 10:18–19: And the glory of Jehovah went forth from over the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight when they went forth, and the wheels beside them: and they stood at the door of the east gate of Jehovah’s house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.

In the third stage, the Shechinah Glory departed from the Eastern Gate and moved over to the Mount of Olives—the fourth position—in Ezekiel 11:22–23: Then did the cherubim lift up their wings, and the wheels were beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. And the glory of Jehovah went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.

Finally, in the fourth stage of departure, the Shechinah Glory left Israel and disappeared from Jewish history. It is only here that we truly see the fulfillment of the name Ichabod: the Glory had departed.
M. The Second Temple

After the return of the Jews from Babylon, the Second Temple was built. But the Shechinah Glory was not in the Second Temple as it was in the First Temple, according to Haggai 2:3: Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing?

However, Haggai 2:9 contained a promise: The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, says Jehovah of hosts.

Haggai the Prophet promised that the Glory that had departed would come in a different and greater way to the Second Temple. Unlike the Tabernacle and the First Temple, the Second Temple did not begin with a manifestation of the Shechinah Glory. But the promise was made that the Glory that once departed would come in a greater way to that very same Second Temple. They would again see the manifestation of God’s presence in the Shechinah Glory. The fact that this Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 necessitates the fulfillment of Haggai’s prophecy to be prior to that time.

II. THE SHECHINAH GLORY IN NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY

A. The Appearance to the Shepherds

The first historical appearance of the Shechinah Glory in the New Testament is in Luke 2:8–9: And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

It was the glory of the Lord that appeared and it shone round about them. This is clearly the reappearance of the Shechinah Glory. It announced the birth of the Messiah to Jewish shepherds.

B. The Christmas Star

Matthew 2:1–12 contains the record of the visit of the Magi from the east who were led there by a visible star. That this was no ordinary star is evident by the actions that the star took. First, the star appeared and disappeared on at least two occasions. Secondly, the star led them from the east to the west. Thirdly, it led them from the north to the south. Fourthly, the star stood over the very house where Yeshua (Jesus) was. And fifth, it was His privately-owned star in a sense that is not true of any other star. All this rules out that this star was just an ordinary star. The Greek word for star means “radiance” or “brilliance.” Coming in the form of a light, this was the reappearance of the Shechinah Glory, announcing the birth of the Messiah to Gentiles.

C. The Coming of the Shechinah Glory in a New Form

The Shechinah Glory reappeared in a completely new form in the fulfillment of the Haggai prophecy. This is the point of John 1:1–14. This passage proclaims the coming of the Shechinah Light in a new, visible manifestation. Verse 14 focuses on the new form of the Shechinah Glory: And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.

The Greek word skeinei was borrowed from the Hebrew Shechinah and Hellenized, because Greek does not have an “sh” sound. Although skeinei is translated as dwelt, there is a different Greek word meaning, “to dwell.” Skeinei actually

means “to tabernacle.” Verse 14 literally reads, “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.” In other words, it was a new, visible manifestation of the presence of God dwelling among men.

The result of this “tabernacling” was that men were able to behold the Glory in the form of a man—the God Man. This was a fulfillment of Isaiah 9:2, which spoke of the coming light: The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined.

The many times that Yeshua walked in the Temple Compound during His ministry fulfilled the prophecy of Haggai. His Glory was manifested by His cleansing the Temple of the money changers and sellers of sacrifices, and by His teaching in the Temple Compound, especially during the Feasts of Passover and Tabernacles.

The parallel with the Old Testament should not be missed. In the beginning of its history, the Shechinah Glory appeared and disappeared before making a more permanent abode in the Tabernacle and Temple. It then departed from the Mount of Olives. In New Testament history, it first appeared and disappeared, and then came in a more permanent form in the person of the Messiah, abiding with Israel for an extended period of time. Later, it, too, departed Israel from the Mount of Olives.

D. The Transfiguration

1. The Descriptive Passages

The greatest manifestation of the Shechinah Glory in the person of Jesus is found in the Transfiguration passages. The four passages where a description is given are: Matthew 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36; and 2 Peter 1:16–18. These passages give different descriptions of what occurred which, taken singularly or altogether, picture the brilliance of the Shechinah Glory.

a. Matthew 17:1–8

The Matthew passage states: his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light (v. 2). A bright cloud overshadowed Him, and the Voice of God spoke out of the cloud, authenticating the Messiahship of Yeshua (v. 5). The appearance of the cloud and the Voice of God speaking out of the cloud was the very same thing that had occurred at Mount Sinai. This description clearly reflects the Shechinah manifestations of the Old Testament that are developed further in the New Testament as they are fulfilled in the person of the Messiah. While the shining of the face of Moses was that of a reflected glory, the shining of Yeshua was the shining of the Shechinah Glory itself. Moses was like the moon, but Jesus was like the sun.

b. Mark 9:2–8

The passage in Mark states in verse 3: his garments became glistening, exceeding white, so as no fuller on earth can whiten them, and a cloud overshadowed them in verse 7.


The Luke passage states in verse 29: the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling.

They saw His glory while the cloud overshadowed Him.

d. **2 Peter 1:16–18**

In the 2 Peter passage, Peter proclaimed what he saw on the Mount of Transfiguration and claimed to be an eyewitness of his majesty. The Messiahship of Yeshua was authenticated by this Majestic Glory.

Jesus was the visible manifestation of God’s presence in a new form. At the Mount of Transfiguration, the Glory that was veiled by the human body shown through, and three of the apostles were able to behold the Shechinah Glory in its brightness and in a form greater than what had appeared in the Old Testament. For, besides the repetition of the Old Testament manifestations, there was also the unique Shechinah manifestation of Yeshua Himself as the God-Man.

### 2. Other New Testament Writings

a. **2 Corinthians 4:5–6**

The Messiah as the new manifestation of God’s presence is taught in later New Testament writings as well. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:5–6: For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

This passage states that, through Yeshua, light shines out of darkness and the light is that of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Clearly, then, the Glory of God was manifested in the person of Yeshua, and He was indeed a new manifestation of God’s presence.

b. **Hebrews 1:1–3**

This is further developed by Hebrews 1:1–3: God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, has at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

In verse 1, it is stated that, in the past, God had revealed Himself in a number of different ways, but in verse 2, He has now revealed Himself through the Son. Then verse 3 describes the Son, and the description is that of the Shechinah Glory. The Son is described as the brightness of the Father’s glory and the very image of his substance.

c. **Revelation 1:12–16**

Another example is found in the midst of a description of the glorified Son of Man in Revelation 1:12–16. The latter part of verse 16 reads: and his countenance was as the sun shines in his strength.

The outward appearance of Yeshua exuded such brightness that the Glory of the shining is comparable to that of the sun. His physical body no longer veils the shining brightness of the Glory.

### E. The Reflection of that Glory
1. **2 Corinthians 3:12–18**

Just as Moses for a time reflected the Glory that he beheld at Sinai when God manifested Himself to Moses in a greater way, believers today can also reflect the Glory of the Messiah, who was an even greater manifestation of the Shechinah Glory, according to **2 Corinthians 3:12–18**: *Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness of speech, and are not as Moses, who put a veil upon his face, that the children of Israel should not look stedfastly on the end of that which was passing away: but their minds were hardened: for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains, it not being revealed to them that it is done away in Christ. But unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lies upon their heart. But whencsoever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.*

The imagery is taken from the account of the reflecting of God’s Glory through the face of Moses. In verses 12–13, it is pointed out that Moses’ face was veiled so that the fading of the Glory should not be seen. In verses 14–15, this veil still remains, for Israel has failed to see the passing away of the Dispensation of the Law. In verses 16–17, the veil is removed from Jewish eyes only when they turn from the Law to Yeshua the Messiah. When Moses turned away from the people to the Lord, the veil was removed. In the same way, when the Jew turns away from the Law to Yeshua the Messiah, that veil is also removed.

Then in verse 18, Paul deals with the reflection of the Shechinah Glory by believers. The believer beholds the Glory of the Lord with an *unveiled face* and he is *transformed into the same image from glory to glory*. The *glory* seen in the Messiah creates a similar glory in the believer. It is Jesus who possesses the Shechinah Glory, but the believer is to reflect the glory of the Messiah in himself. While with Moses the reflection was seen by the shining of his face, in the case of the believer the reflection is to be seen in the transformation of the believer’s life into one with a spiritual character. As it was in the case of the Ezekiel passages, the Shechinah Glory in this passage is connected with the Holy Spirit, for the means of spirituality is by means of being filled or controlled by the Holy Spirit.

2. **The Book of Ephesians**

That believers are to reflect the Shechinah Glory of the Messiah is also taught in **Ephesians 1**. In verse 6, the believer is to the praise of the glory of his grace. In verse 12, the believer should be to the praise of his glory. In verse 14, the believer is unto the praise of his glory. In verse 18, the believer is the glory of his inheritance in the saints. Parallel passages include: **Romans 8:29; Philippians 3:21**; and **Colossians 3:10**.

3. **Summary**

To summarize this section, the historical appearance of the Shechinah Glory was primarily manifested in the person of the Messiah in the New Testament; He was the new visible manifestation of God’s presence. However, today it is the obligation of the believer to reflect that Glory.

F. **The Book of Acts**

The Shechinah Glory was seen on two occasions in the Book of Acts.

1. **The Feast of Pentecost**

The first occasion is found in Acts 2:1–3: And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them.

The visibility of tongues parting asunder, like as of fire was the manifestation the Shechinah Glory. Following the motif already found in the Old Testament, the Shechinah appears in the form of fire with a close association with the Holy Spirit.

2. The Apostle Paul

The second occurrence is far more evident: the appearance to Paul on the Damascus Road, recorded in three different parts of the Book of Acts. First, it is described as a light shining out of Heaven in Acts 9:3–8: And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus: and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven: and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecute you me? And he said, Who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom you persecute: but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told you what you must do. And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing; and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

Secondly, it is further described as being a great light out of Heaven; Paul testifies that he was blinded because of the glory of that light in Acts 22:6–11: And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and drew nigh unto Damascus, about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecute you me? And I answered, Who are you, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you persecute. And they that were with me beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of him that spoke to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told you of all things which are appointed for you to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me I came into Damascus.

Thirdly, this light is described as being above the brightness of the sun; the Shechinah Glory appeared to Paul to commission him to become the Apostle to the Gentiles in Acts 26:13–18: at midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why persecute you me? it is hard for you to kick against the goad. And I said, Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you persecute. But arise, and stand upon your feet: for to this end have I appeared unto you, to appoint you a minister and a witness both of the things wherein you have seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto you; delivering you from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send you, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me.

G. The Book of Revelation

The last historic appearance of the Shechinah Glory was to the Apostle John in Revelation 1:12–16, which was discussed earlier. This passage describes how Yeshua looks today in the fullness of His Glory; His physical body no longer veils the shining brightness of His Glory.

The purpose of this final manifestation was to commission John to write the Book of Revelation and, by so doing, to bring the Scriptures to a close.

III. THE SHECHINAH GLORY IN PROPHECY

A. The Great Tribulation

The only passage that somehow relates the Shechinah Glory with the Great Tribulation is Revelation 15:8: And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and none was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.

The Shechinah Glory is connected with the bowl-judgments, which will be the final and most severe series of judgments in the Tribulation. These judgments will bring to a completion the wrath of God. In the Book of Numbers, the Shechinah Glory rendered judgment for sin, and it will do so again in the Great Tribulation.

B. The Second Coming of the Messiah

With the Second Coming, there will again be the manifestation of the Shechinah Glory in His visible and physical presence. Matthew 16:27 reads: For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds.

The point of this passage is that the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father. Just as in John 1:14 when men were able to behold the Glory of the Father at the First Coming, it is with the same Glory of the Father that Jesus will return, and it will be seen by men again.

Another passage relating the Shechinah Glory with the Second Coming is Matthew 24:30: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Just prior to the Second Coming, the sign of the Son of man will appear in the heavens, and that sign will certainly be the Shechinah Glory, “for the Son of Man will come in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory.” Parallel passages are Mark 13:26 and Luke 21:27.

C. The Millennium

The greatest manifestation of the Shechinah Glory in prophecy, especially to Israel, will be in the Messianic Kingdom. Altogether, there will be a total of five simultaneous manifestations of the Shechinah Glory.

1. The Millennial Temple

There will exist a visible manifestation in the Holy of Holies of the Millennial Kingdom. Just as Ezekiel carefully plotted the departure of the Shechinah Glory from Israel, he also prophesied and recorded the future return of the Shechinah Glory in Ezekiel 43:1–7a: Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looks toward the east: and, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shined with his glory. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city; and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I

fell upon my face. And the glory of Jehovah came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. And the Spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of Jehovah filled the house. And I heard one speaking unto me out of the house; and a man stood by me. And he said unto me, Son of man, this is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever.

In verses 1–3, the Shechinah Glory will come from the east, and the earth will shine from its light. To the east of the City of Jerusalem is the Mount of Olives. In other words, the Shechinah Glory will return from the very same direction it had departed in Ezekiel 11:23. In verse 4, it will come through the Eastern Gate and enter the Holy of Holies of the Millennial Temple in verse 5. Just as the Shechinah Glory departed through the Eastern Gate, it will return through the Eastern Gate as well. Finally, in verses 6–7a, Ezekiel points out that, at this point, the Shechinah Glory will make its permanent residence with Israel. In Hebrew, the words I will dwell have the same root as Shechinah. At long last, the prayers of Moses and Solomon will be answered.

According to Ezekiel 44:1–2, the Eastern Gate will be shut, never to be reopened again throughout the Millennium as a result of the return of the Shechinah Glory through the Eastern Gate: Then he brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which looks toward the east; and it was shut. And Jehovah said unto me, This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, neither shall any man enter in by it; for Jehovah, the God of Israel, has entered in by it; therefore it shall be shut.

It should be pointed out that the gate Ezekiel is speaking of has nothing to do with the present Golden Gate on the present eastern wall of Jerusalem. Many of the more sensational prophecy buffs have tried to relate this passage to the present Golden Gate. But from the context this cannot be; the present Golden Gate has nothing to do with the Ezekiel passage. The Ezekiel passage is speaking of the Millennial Temple Compound, which will have a totally different wall and gate altogether. Furthermore, this gate is shut because the Shechinah Glory will have reentered Israel through it; the shutting of the gate symbolizes that the Shechinah Glory will not depart from Israel again. Regarding the present Golden Gate, the Shechinah Glory did not enter through it, nor did Yeshua, since the present gate was built centuries after His time.

2. Mount Zion

Not only will the Shechinah Glory be in the Holy of Holies of the Millennial Temple, it will also cover the entire new Mount Zion according to Isaiah 4:5–6: And Jehovah will create over the whole habitation of mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory shall be spread a covering. And there shall be a pavilion for a shade in the day time from the heat, and for a refuge and for a covert from storm and from rain.

Here the Shechinah Glory is described as a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night. Over all the glory, there is a covering giving protection from the heat, storm, and rain. The new Mount Zion, described in various parts of the prophetic Word, will be an exceedingly high mountain with a fifty mile square plateau on top. The new City of Jerusalem will be on the south side, and the Millennial Temple will be on the north side. But over this mountain will be the visible manifestation of the Shechinah Glory in a cloud and smoke and flaming fire, as it was over Mount Sinai and the Tabernacle during the Wilderness Wanderings.

3. The City of Jerusalem

The Shechinah Glory will stand and rest especially over Jerusalem, according to Zechariah 2:4–5: and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, by reason of the multitude of men and cattle therein. For I, says Jehovah, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her.

The prophet states that Jehovah will be a wall of fire round about Jerusalem and that He will be the glory in the midst of her. These are all manifestations of the Shechinah Glory in relationship to Jerusalem during the Millennial Kingdom.

4. All Israel

Fourthly, other passages show that the Shechinah Glory will be with all Israel, not merely in the Temple, or Mount Zion, or the City of Jerusalem.

That the nations will see the glory of Jehovah in Israel is stated in Isaiah 35:1–2: The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of our God.

This is brought out again in Isaiah 58:8–9a: Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your healing shall spring forth speedily; and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of Jehovah shall be your rearward. Then shall you call, and Jehovah will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, Here I am.

Concerning Israel, Isaiah said the light shall break forth as the morning, and ... the glory of Jehovah shall be your rerward.

Also the prophet writes in Isaiah 60:1–3: Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon you. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but Jehovah will arise upon you, and his glory shall be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

In verse 1, the Glory of Jehovah is risen over Israel; in verse 2, His Glory shall be seen in Israel; and in verse 3, the Gentiles shall come to Israel’s brightness.

The point of all these passages is that the Shechinah Glory will dwell in a visible manifestation with all Israel. For the Gentile nations to experience this visible manifestation, they will have to come to the Jews (Zech. 8:20–23).

5. The Reign of the Messiah

Fifth, the Shechinah Glory will also be seen in the visible reign of Yeshua the Messiah. This is brought out by Isaiah 11:10: And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, that stands for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek; and his resting place shall be glorious.

Also in Isaiah 40:5: and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah has spoken it.

Jesus will again be a visible manifestation of the Shechinah Glory in the form of the God Man without the veiling, while other manifestations will be in the forms of cloud, fire, and smoke. All of this will be related to Israel, for it is with Israel that the Shechinah Glory will dwell in every one of its manifestations.

D. The Eternal Order

The Millennium will last only 1,000 years, and then history will enter the period of the Eternal Order. But here, too, the Shechinah Glory will be evident. John makes this emphasis in Revelation 21:1–3: And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Verses 1 describe the New Jerusalem, but then verse 3 describes the new presence of God in Jerusalem: the tabernacle of God will be with men and He will dwell with men. The word dwell is the Greek word skeinei, which means “to tabernacle.” Just as it was with the Old Testament, so it will be in the Eternal Order, the Shechinah Glory will tabernacle with men, although there will be no Tabernacle or Temple per se.

Jerusalem will have the Glory of God because of this “tabernacling” with men, according to Revelation 21:10–11: And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

Since Jerusalem will have the Glory of God because of God’s dwelling with men, there will be certain results, according to Revelation 21:23–24: And the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it.

Because the Shechinah Glory will be there, there will be no need of natural light from the sun or the moon, nor artificial light of the lamp. The Shechinah Glory will provide all the light that will be necessary, and all the inhabitants will be able to walk in that light.

So it will be for all eternity. ☦
The Bible is basically a story about God. When we turn to the Bible as a self-help book, we end up bored or frustrated with what seems to be a rambling collection of stories. What if the Bible is more about God than it is about us? How thrilling to discover that every element of scripture—the reports of events, the verses of distilled wisdom, the lyrical prophecies—converge in one central saga of one worthy Person.

We’re used to the idea that the Bible is a true story. It’s so true that the story is still unfolding to this minute. We are used to hearing that the Bible is a love story. But we tend to see only one side of the love: how God loves people. If the main point of the Bible is that God is to be loved with heart, soul, mind and strength, perhaps it would be wise to read the entire story from God’s point of view. When we look at it all from God’s viewpoint, the grand love story finally makes sense: God is not just loving people. He is transforming them to become people who can fully love Him. God is drawing people as worshipers to offer freely to Him their love-inspired glory.

God can be loved only when He is known. That’s why the story of the Bible is the story of God revealing Himself in order to draw to Himself obedient worship, or glory, from the nations. With God’s passionate love at the core, the Bible is truly the story of His glory.

**BASIC CONCEPTS OF GLORY**

To trace the story of God as the Bible presents it, we need a grasp of three related ideas which define the story at every juncture: glory, the name of God and worship.

**Glory**

Don’t be thrown off by the religious-sounding word “glory.” Glory is the relational beauty that every person’s heart yearns to behold and even to enter. The word “glory” in scripture refers to the essential worth, beauty and value of people, created things and, of course, the Creator Himself. The Hebrew word for glory is a word meaning weight, substance, and at the same time, brilliance or radiant beauty. To glorify someone is to recognize their intrinsic worth and beauty, and to speak of that feature in a public way. To glorify God is to praise or to speak of Him openly and truth-
fully. Glory is at the heart of true worship throughout the Scriptures:

All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord; and they shall glorify Your name (Ps 86:9).

We…worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus...(Phil 3:3).

The idea of “glory” also describes honor that can be given or awarded. When someone is exalted or made great, they are, to some extent, in a biblical sense, glorified. God is so rich in glory that He bestows extravagant honors upon His human servants without compromising His own majesty in the slightest. Jesus exposed our habit of seeking “glory from one another,” and yet failing to “seek the glory that is from the one and only God” (John 5:44).

The Name of God

Throughout the larger story, the biblical authors use the idea of the “name of God” as a key idea. To distinguish the functions of reference, revelation and reputation, it may help to sort out the usages with three easy-to-remember categories: name-tag, window and fame name.

Name-tag names

First, there are the names themselves used to designate God in the Bible. God is never anonymous in His story. He uses many names for Himself. Because the function is reference, we can call these names, for our purposes, the “name-tag” names of God since a name-tag distinguishes and identifies someone. It is just as true to refer to the God of scripture as “Lord of hosts” as it is to refer to Him as “God Almighty,” or “Judge of all the earth” or “King of glory.” Each of these names is truly God’s name. 1

Window name

Second, God is pleased to disclose Himself accurately by any of the Biblical names. The function is revelation. For example, anyone who spends a few minutes pondering the biblical name “The Lord is my Shepherd” will have a better understanding of the nurturing kindness of God.

Fame name

The third usage of the phrase “the name of God” is the most abundant in the Bible, even though it is little recognized. “God’s name” most often refers to the idea of His public renown. I call it God’s “fame name.” The function is God’s reputation. God’s name is His global namesake. It is the open memory, based on historical incidents, which establishes a reputation worthy of future trust. God’s name is the body of truth about Himself which He has displayed and declared in the long-unfolding story of the Bible. The Hebrew people were not only to treasure this story, but they were also to tell it. Unlike the way of many religions, God’s revelation was never to be a secret affair for a few people. Isaiah calls Israel to “make known His deeds among the peoples,” so that the nations are steadily reminded that “His name is exalted” (Isa 12:4). As we shall see, much of the story of the Bible recounts what God has done to make His name great among the nations.

Worship

Why does God want to be known with such precision? God wants to be more than globally famous—He yearns to be truly worshiped.

God Reveals Glory to Receive Glory

God’s glory flows in two directions. The first direction of His glory is toward the world. He shows His glory to people throughout the earth. He reveals who He is and what He has done in order to bring about the second direction of glory—that people might give Him glory in loving worship. God reveals glory to all nations in order that He might receive glory from people through worship.

Psalm 96 shows these two directions of glory. God mandates a declaration of His glory to the nations in verses 2 and 3:
Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.

What an eloquent portrayal of the evangelization of the world! But the Psalmist goes on to tell the purpose for world evangelization by describing the second aspect of God’s glory: a response of glory from the nations toward God in verses 7 to 9:

Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
Give to the LORD glory and strength.
Give to the LORD the glory of His name;
Bring an offering, and come into His courts.2
Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness;
Tremble before Him, all the earth.”

The heart of mission flows in this amazing economy of glory: God reveals His glory to all nations in order to receive glory from all creation.

A Purpose Beyond Salvation
People are indeed saved by the global declaration of God’s salvation, but the ultimate value of their salvation is not to be seen in what they are saved from, it is what they are saved for that really matters. People are saved to serve God in worship. In this respect, we can say that world evangelization is for God. However accustomed we may be to seeing people as being of paramount importance, the Bible is clear: The rationale for mission is the colossal worthiness of God. Examine the logic of Psalm 96:2-4:

Proclaim good tidings of His salvation....Tell of His glory...among all peoples. For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.

A Rationale Greater than Supremacy
The rationale for mission seems simple enough: Since God is supreme, every creature should bow down in subjection. But can this really be the logic at the center of the universe? Our hearts won’t buy it. There is something more. The Scriptures are loud about the truth that God is love. God calls people to love Him with all that they are. Where is God’s love, and ours, in response?

A God who demands worship just because He’s supreme doesn’t seem like a very loving God. In fact, such a God might not seem like He is worthy to even be admired. God’s penchant for praise might make Him appear to be struggling with a low self-image problem. It’s foolish to speak of God’s jealousy for worship as if He were a petulant tribal deity threatened by rival gods. God is not threatened; rather He is immeasurably saddened by false worship. When people worship anyone or anything besides Him, they become like it. God has better intentions for people.

What is true worship anyway? Worship takes place when people recognize who God is and offer public acknowledgment and freely approach God, personally offering face-to-face gratitude and day-to-day allegiance. Worship is genuine relational interaction with God. That’s why God always welcomes us to worship with a gift. He never needs the worship gifts. But the gift brings the giver. That is why the nations are urged to come bringing a gift, offering God tokens of their finest worth (Ps 96:8 and many others). By their sacrifices and gifts, they offer themselves.

Fully Bestowing His Love
Why is God so desirous of worship? Two reasons: He is delighted by the sincere love that comes to Him in true worship. But there is more: By wooing people into true worship, God is able to fully bestow His love upon them. You can see it in Psalm 96:6.

Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

“Splendor and majesty” do not refer to God’s self-experience. Rather, along with “strength and beauty” (the parallel passage says “joy” in 1 Chr 16:27), they are features of God’s presence that are to be the experience of people who approach Him in true worship. There can be nothing more splendid or majestic for humans than to be elevated and placed in the gorgeous, heart-stopping grandeur of God’s regal presence.

Worship is the way that people glorify God. When looked at from God’s point of view, we can see that worship is also God’s way of glori-
Worship fulfills God’s love. He loves people so vastly that He wills to exalt them to something better than greatness; He wants to bring them into an honored nearness to Him. Stretch your mind and your heart as far as you can, but you’ll never perceive the extent of what God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor 2:9).

Perhaps John got a glimpse of the “splendor and majesty” of those courts in Revelation 5:1-14. He heard all of heaven’s myriads raise their voices acclaiming the marvel that God Himself has purchased people from every tribe and tongue. Why has God bought such ignoble humans at the extravagant cost of the blood of His Son? Furthermore, why has He purchased some from every single ethnicity? Of what value are these ones? Their precious value is this: They will be His priests. Some from every people will gladly offer to God the distinctive honors and redeemed glories of their people. Each of the peoples has eternal worth because of Christ’s blood. Each of the peoples has an appointed place before Him. God has set His mighty heart to bring them there. It must come forth. The passion of this unrequited love of God for each of the peoples is the very soul of any true missionary enterprise.

The Bible is the astounding drama of God’s love drawing the worship of the nations. Remember the basic thesis: God reveals his glory to all peoples so that he may receive glory from all creation. This double dimension of glory can help make sense out of an apparent jumble of ancient stories.

Abraham
When Abraham arrived in the land of promise, he did not excel as a brilliant missionary, however we might define that role. He’s certainly not on record as a great evangelist. He was actually thrown out of Egypt in disgrace (Gen 12:10-20). Abraham’s neighbors frightened him into lying about his family. Abraham’s rationale for falsely presenting his wife does not reveal an evangelist’s confidence that lives might change: “Surely there is no fear of God in this place” (Gen 20:11). But for all his failings, he did the most missionary thing he could have done when he first arrived in the new land: His first act was to establish ongoing public worship of God. “He built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD” (Gen 12:7-8).

Blessed to Be a Blessing
At one point Abraham rescued some of his powerful neighbors from an alliance of marauding nations (Gen 14). After the miraculous victory, Abraham refused to accept the windfall of reward from the king of Sodom. If he accepted the largess, he knew that from that point, he and his family would always be viewed as living under the patronage of that city. Instead he chose to keep himself positioned before the nations as one specifically blessed by God.

voice praise gifts to God in their many languages, but no people is to offer speculative guesses about what constitutes rightful praise. Only the truth God has revealed about Himself—“the glory of His name”—is the substance and true measure of worthy praise (verse 8).
With the nations watching, Abraham resolutely named God as the one who would reward and bless him. His bold words (Gen 14:21-24) were substantiated by the gift of goods Abraham offered God. Abraham offered to God the wealth of Sodom as well as that of other nations. He helped foreign nations present a tithe to God, a recognized formal act of worship (Gen 14:18-20). With Melchizedek as presiding priest, Abraham functioned, as a priest, by offering worship gifts on behalf of other nations.

Abraham was blessed in order to be a blessing to the nations (Gen 12:1-3). But the purpose goes beyond the blessing of nations. God HImself is blessed! Melchizedek openly recognized that Abraham was blessed by God. By God’s power, Abraham had been a blessing to his neighbors by rescuing enslaved families and their goods. But the grand result was that God Himself would be blessed in praise! Listen to Melchizedek: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High…And blessed be God Most High…” (Gen 14:18-20).

What do we learn from the entire series of events? Abraham made God’s name known by his ongoing worship. God made His name great by dramatic redemptive power through His people. The outcome was a multi-national gathering of grateful honor in which God was explicitly worshiped in truth.

Global Purpose Confirmed by Obedience in Worship

The crucial, proving moment of Abraham’s life was a worship event (Gen 22). God told Abraham to bring His son Isaac to offer him in an act of worship. It was a test to prove what Abraham and his family would be. Would God find in Abraham an obedient, priestly passion for God (literally, “a fearer of God,” Gen 22:12)? Would Abraham prove to be zealous to offer the worship God desired? If so, God would find him to have the kind of faith that God wanted multiplied among the nations. You know the story. At the very moment that Abraham obeyed in worship, God spoke from heaven with solemn oath, declaring forcefully His global purpose to bless the peoples of the earth through Abraham’s family (22:18).

The Exodus

God did more for His name than to gain early worship from Abraham. God went global in a big way at the Exodus. At first glance, the story of the Exodus doesn’t look like a great missionary event. Thousands of Egyptians died. Grief covered every Egyptian home. What was God doing?

The key passage is Exodus 9:13-16 in which Moses gives an ultimatum to Pharaoh, with a bold word about His purposes:

Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews,

Let My people go, that they may serve Me. For this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. For if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth. But indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power, and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.

Take note that God never said, “Let My people go!” That’s just half the sentence, without the purpose. Take care to hear the entire cry of salvation: “Let my people go, that they may worship Me!” (Ex 8:1, 20, 9:1, 10:3)

Pharaoh well understood the entire demand of Moses that the people be released to worship. Pharaoh probably thought that the appeal for a worship vacation was a ploy to disguise plans for escape. Perhaps many of the Hebrews made the same mistake. How many of them may have thought that the plans to worship God in the wilderness were but a ruse to dupe the authorities? Is it any wonder then that many of them remained fixated on matters of comfort, diet, safety and entertainment? They were slow to comprehend that in their escape, God had a purpose for Himself in the sight of the nations. They had turned salvation inside-out: They seriously thought that their rescue was the pre-dominant concern of God. Instead, God was orchestrating a powerful plan to draw the attention of the nations to Himself.

God Brings Global Attention to His Name

God was singling Himself out from all the gods of earth. He was making an “everlast-
The Exodus events revealed His glory by establishing His name in a global way. God wanted everyone in Egypt and beyond to know that there was absolutely no god like the only living God. He wanted the world to watch a mob of slaves marching in procession to worship Him. God established His reputation as one greater and absolutely different (truly holy, not just holier) than every other deity ever dreamed up by man—an exquisite, almighty, resplendent God. The Exodus was to be a reference point for all subsequent revelation to the world of His character, His holiness, and His power. How did chaos in Egypt reveal the ever-living God?

Judging the Gods of Egypt

Some scholars have noted that every one of the plagues of Egypt was either aimed against the false gods of Egypt or the oppressive power structures that were revered with fanatical zeal. Some Egyptian deities, such as the Nile River, or the great sun god, were embarrassed directly by the plagues of blood and darkness. Other deities were indirectly shamed by exposing their complete inability to do what they were supposed to do. There were gods who were revered as being able to deal with infestations of insects or to protect cattle from disease. The powerful religious elite was shamed. The deeply revered military was summarily annihilated. Why was God wrecking Egypt before the watching world?

God was executing judgments “against all the gods of Egypt” (Ex 12:12). He was not aiming at destroying people, but devastating one of the most highly regarded collections of false gods in all the world. If He wanted to destroy the people of Egypt He could have done it quickly. “For if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you..., you would then have been cut off from the earth. But indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain...to proclaim My name through all the earth” (Ex 9:15-16).

The Nations Take Notice

Did it work? Did the world take notice of God making His name great? The devastation recorded in the book of Exodus didn’t make headlines in Egyptian hieroglyphics, but we should understand that events which put Egypt in a bad light never were chipped into stone.

The Bible reports that the waves of the Red Sea hadn’t quite calmed down before Moses led the people in singing, “The LORD is His name....Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness?” Then they began to list some of the surrounding nations, stating clearly that: “The peoples have heard, and they tremble...” (Ex 15:3,7,15).

Jethro had married into Moses’ family, but was still very much a Gentile. He had certainly heard about the God of the Hebrews for years from Moses. Perhaps many peoples and cities had heard something of this great God without trusting or worshiping Him. But listen to Jethro after the plagues of Egypt. “Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people” (Ex 18:11). Jethro was a leading priest of a foreign people, well-qualified to evaluate religious matters (Ex 18:1).

As we read the story of Moses confronting Egypt today, it might appear that Egypt was just another harsh empire that abused slaves. In Moses’ day it was open knowledge that Egypt was a complex of religious, economic, and military powers inextricably enmeshed with spiritual powers. God unraveled the system to show it for what it was at the core—horrid, spiritual evil, dedicated to diverting worshipers from coming to Him. God had blessed Egypt, but Egypt had made itself an enemy of God. God’s “judgments” of the plagues and the awesome Red Sea affair (Ex 12:12) are not to be understood as mere punishment for bad deeds. God’s intervention put down oppressive evil in order to liberate people. Why were they freed? “Let my people go, that they may worship Me.” God had orchestrated the Exodus events so that He revealed His glory by establishing His name in a global way. Then, with the world watching, He drew the people to Himself to establish a way of worship that all other nations could enter.
The Conquest
The conquest of Canaan should be seen in the same light of God winning to Himself a single, holy people of worship. To that people, and by their witness, He will draw every other people to revere and know Him.

Just Recompense
At first glance to modern readers, the conquest may seem like a genocidal land grab rather than an act of a good and loving God. But a close look at the pertinent passages of Scripture shows that God ordained the conquest of Canaan with a double purpose. First, God was bringing just recompense for the “wickedness” of the peoples of the land (Deut 9:5). Long before this God had told Abraham that “the iniquity of the Amorites (was) not yet complete” (Gen 15:16). God had allowed sin to run its full course. We might wonder how the Canaanites felt about God’s wrath. The one statement about the conquest recorded from a Canaanite came from a king who acknowledged the righteous execution of God’s justice: “As I have done, so God has repaid me” (Judg 1:7).

Demolishing False Worship
The second, and primary reason for the thorough ferocity of the Hebrew conquest was this: God was demolishing systems of false worship in order to preserve the singular devotion of His people and the holiness of His name. Almost every passage describing the rationale behind ousting the peoples living in the land offers this reason: Canaanite worship would swiftly turn the Hebrews “away from following Me to serve other gods.” (Deut 4:15-24, 6:13-15, 7:1-8, et al.). Joshua and Moses both voiced the same God-given rationale for the violence of the conquest: it was, at the core, an annihilation of false worship. God had mandated the destruction so that Israel would never “mention the name of their gods,...or serve them, or bow down to them” (Josh 23:7). While there are difficulties in fully understanding this part of the story of God’s people, one thing is clear about the conquest: the point was pure worship. God’s objective was not that Israel would be the only people that worshiped Him. His point was to insure that He was the only God that they worshiped.

Idolatry Would Profane the Name
Idolatry doesn’t seem to threaten most believers today. The first four commands of the Ten Commandments can mystify or even bore us. Why was God so ferociously passionate about idolatry? Without grasping His global purposes for glory, it may seem that God is over-wrought about a nasty, primitive habit.

But look at idolatry from God’s point of view. God had distinguished His name far above any other. Any kind of idolatry would, in effect, profane (that is, bring down as common) God’s name, the very name God had just singled out and sounded forth to the world.

Look again at the conquest. The point of the invasion was not that Israel deserved someone else’s homeland. God told Israel clearly that they weren’t special or favored because of their intrinsic righteousness or their great nobility (Deut 7:6-7). Israel was told repeatedly that God would destroy them just as swiftly if they turned away from His worship to other gods.

The record is clear that the Hebrew people were at several points precariously close to being destroyed. Why? Hadn’t God specially loved and saved them? For all the special love God had promised the descendants of Abraham, God was resolute in working for His glory. God was not averse to taking a delay and dealing with another generation. The issue at every juncture was the worship of the people to God and their testimony to His glory.

One instance makes this constant purpose of God clear: the rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea. Israel had followed God through a divinely opened way, and stood on the threshold of fulfilling God’s purposes. Spies were sent to check out the land and the people. Ten of the spies spooked the entire people, touching off a hysterical rebellion for self-preservation (Num 13:17-14:10). God was ready to destroy the entire people and start over with Moses, making out of him another people “greater and mightier” than the Hebrews. The point is not that the people had done something so bad that God had become fatally angry. God simply required for His purposes a nation who would at least believe in Him.
Moses actually argues with God, bringing up, as he had in a previous instance (Ex 32:1-14), that the nations were watching. They had heard something of God’s name which could be falsified by what God was about to do. “Now if You slay this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of Your fame (literally “name”) will say, ‘Because the Lord could not bring this people into the land….’” Moses challenges God, telling Him that the nations will conclude that the Hebrew God is weak—all beginnings, but no finish (Num 14:15-16).

Then Moses asks God to magnify Himself according to how God Himself had summarized His name: “The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression…. A long pause from heaven, and then God said that He had pardoned Israel according to the prayer of Moses. Then God raised His voice, I think, using some of the strongest expressions possible: “But indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord!” (Num 14:17-21).

What was God saying? That He would continue to use the nation, but wait for another generation. Even though He was taking a delay, He remained everlastingly resolute to bring forth His purpose on earth: to fill the earth with “the glory of the Lord.” To fulfill that purpose required an obedient, worshiping, witnessing people.

The Temple
Perhaps the first clear mention of the temple is made on the plains of Moab prior to Joshua leading the people into the land. Moses issues God’s directives to destroy “all the places where the nations...serve their gods.” Instead of remodeling any of the former places of worship, the shrines were to be completely ruined in order to “obliterate their name from that place.” God’s name is never to be equivocated with the name of any other deity. Instead, a new and special place would be built, “to establish His name there for His dwelling” (Deut 12:2-14, especially verse 5).

Consider God’s declaration of purpose for the temple: “to establish His name there for His dwelling.” God wanted to do two things in this special place. First, He wanted to reveal Himself by “His name.” It would be a place of revelation as worshipers continually exalt His character and voice the stories and songs about His working. Second, God desired a place of encounter, of relationship, of dwelling. From the earliest mention of a tabernacle God intimated His desire to enjoy an exalted nearness amidst His people, “that I may dwell among them” (Ex 25:8). To “dwell” is a relational affair. It is consummated worship. God coming near His people as they come near to Him. Solomon knew that the temple was not God’s domicile. As he dedicated the fabulous structure, he prayed: “But will God indeed dwell with mankind on the earth? Behold, heaven and highest heaven cannot contain You; how much less this house which I have built” (2 Chr 6:18).

David had designed the temple as a place of approaching God with praise. Solomon installed the choirs and priestly musicians that his father had planned. These choirs were to continually “praise and glorify the Lord” using some of the strongest expressions possible: “But indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord!” (Num 14:17-21).

What was God saying? That He would continue to use the nation, but wait for another generation. Even though He was taking a delay, He remained everlastingly resolute to bring forth His purpose on earth: to fill the earth with “the glory of the Lord.” To fulfill that purpose required an obedient, worshiping, witnessing people.
Solomon did not pray for a few of the individuals to come, but for many from every one of the peoples. Solomon prayed that the nations would meet God as they came to the house to pray and to worship. He did not ask that Gentiles know God in their own Gentile way, but rather that they would know God just as Israel did. Solomon envisioned all peoples joining Israel in the same kind of humble, joyous, worshipful walk with God that Israel enjoyed—“the fear of the Lord.”

The Nations Begin To Come

Did the report of God’s name go out to the world? Did foreigners ever come to the house of the Lord and learn of the fear of the Lord? Did God answer Solomon’s prayer? The best answer to these questions is “Yes” as well as “No.”

The record shows that soon after the temple was complete (1 Ki 9:25), the Queen of Sheba “heard about the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord” (10:1, my emphasis). She came to learn, she listened to Solomon’s wisdom (v. 8), and came away with understanding of the covenant-keeping God who “loved Israel forever.” As only a royal potentate might see, she realized that God Himself had established the power of Solomon, and the hope that through God’s rulership, there might be “justice and righteousness” (v. 9).

Was this an isolated instance? Apparently not. A few verses later it says that, “All the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart” (v. 24). The world didn’t honor Solomon for being brainy or clever with court cases. The world recognized that God himself had put wisdom in this man’s heart. And what was the first lesson in wisdom that Solomon put forth to the world? “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov 1:7, 9:10). Solomon was introducing the world to the worship of God as well as the life of wisdom under God.

God’s purposes were apparently being fulfilled. His name was great. Israel was making it known so that the nations were coming to know God personally. What could have possibly slowed God’s unfolding plan to draw the nations to Himself? Only one thing. It was the issue about which God most stringently warned His people: idolatry.

And of all the possible horrors, probably the worst thing happened—Solomon himself led the way into grotesque idolatry. It was one of history’s most bitter ironies. Imagine the brilliant hopes with the riches and the desires of the nations turning to Israel. Solomon had consecrated the temple in a spectacle of unimaginable glory. He had closed that event with a blessing of purpose on the building and nation, “so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no one else” (1 Ki 8:60).

And then just three chapters after this climactic opening of doors to the nations to know and fear the only God by name, Solomon’s heart was turned “away after other gods.” He actually constructed shrines within sight of the holy mountain of God (1 Ki 11:1-8). Can any believing reader of these verses not feel disappointment to the point of nausea? It’s hard not to speculate about what might have happened if worship had been pure and steady for at least another generation.

The Persistence of God

God’s plan was simple: God would make His name great and then Israel could make His name known. He has always purposed to single out His name from all other gods, and then to welcome the nations to worship Him personally in the light of that revealed name through the witness of the people of Israel.

The story from this point becomes a prolonged up-and-down struggle with idolatry. Various episodes revive fidelity to God’s worship, but are followed by stunning new lows of profaning God’s name. The uppermost issue throughout the generations is God’s glory by Israel’s worship. At times the people disregarded the worship of God so greatly that generations would pass without the slightest attention to the simple regimens by which God had invited Israel to meet with Him (the ordinances for worship in the books of Moses). The words of some of the prophets show that even when worship patterns were followed, they were often performed superficially. The prophets exposed perfunctory worship, showing that it perversely lacked the justice and the kindness which was supposed to have thrived.
behind every offering and prayer to God (Isa 1:11-15, Amos 5:21-24, Mic 6:6-8). Although God delayed the great shaking of Israel and Judah, He finally separated the people from the land which was to showcase the blessing of God. They were exiled to distant lands. And then the utmost tragedy: The house of God was burned and broken to rubble.

Near the end of the time of exile, Daniel cried out for God to enact His promise to restore the temple and His people. Daniel was intensely aware of the entire saga, how God had brought His people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand... “(to) make a name for yourself, as it is this day” (Dan 9:15). Daniel’s over-riding concern was that the ruins of intended glory on the temple mountain in Jerusalem was a continuing reproach to God’s glory to “all those around us.” He prayed that God would restore the people and the city so that the glory of His name would be restored. Daniel did not base his request on the supposed greatness of Israel, but “for your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people are called by your name” (Dan 9:16-19).

Ezekiel, a near contemporary to Daniel, breathed the same themes. God had restrained His wrath at several junctures from destroying Israel, but God’s restraint had been for the sake of His name (Ezek 20:5-22). The dealings of God with Israel were not because of sickly favoritism, but solely for His glory among the nations:

Thus says the Lord God, ‘It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord.’ (Ezek 36:22-23)

drawn to God by name, and worshiping Him with diverse, lavish glory.

Shout joyfully to God, all the earth. Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious. Say to God, ‘How awesome are your works!’ Because of the greatness of your power your enemies will give feigned obedience to you. All the earth will worship you. And will sing praises to you; they will sing praises to your name (Ps 66:1-4).

All the kings of the earth will give thanks to You, O Lord, when they have heard the words of Your mouth. And they will sing of the ways of the Lord. For great is the glory of the Lord (Ps 138:4-5).

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Hab 2:14).

For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord, to serve him shoulder to shoulder. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my worshippers, my dispersed ones will bring my offerings (Zeph 3:9-10).

For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to my name, and a grain offering that is pure; for my name will be great among the nations (Mal 1:11).

These are but a sampling of the scores of prophetic words which tethered Israel’s identity to the culmination of God’s purposes: the glory of God on earth drawing the worship of all peoples. When the people of God were finally brought back to the land, building the temple was to be top priority. Haggai made it clear that the temple was for God’s glory, and for a greater glory than had ever come before. “And I will shake all the nations; and the desired of the nations will come; and I will fill this house with glory” (Haggai 1:8, 2:7 KJV). From the exile onward, Israel avoided idolatry. But the lesser national glory they desired never came. They were waiting for a messianic deliverer to free them from oppression. They almost missed the Messiah when He came because Jesus’ vision of redemption was for God’s kingdom to be enacted among all peoples.

The Destiny of Israel: Glory From All Nations

Daniel and Ezekiel weren’t the only prophets who saw the ongoing story of Israel as focusing on God’s name and glory. Other prophets and psalmists spoke of the history and the destiny of Israel in terms of the nations being
Chapter 6 THE STORY OF HIS GLORY

The Glory of God in Christ

Christ is the crescendo of the story of God’s glory. At the end of all things, He will have bought and brought people from every tribe and tongue to honor the Father. It’s no surprise then, to see how His every move was part of pressing the story of God’s glory toward its culmination for all nations.

Jesus summed up His ministry in terms of bringing global glory to His Father:

“I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.” And what was the work? “I manifested Your name to the men You gave Me out of the world” (John 17:4,6).

Sanctify Your Name

The prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray can be easily misunderstood because of the antiquated English translation, “Hallowed be Thy name.” This prayer is not a statement of praise. It is explicitly a request in the original language: “Father…sanctify your name!” To paraphrase, “Father lift up, single out, exalt, manifest, and reveal Your name to the people of earth. Become famous for who You really are. Cause the people of earth to know and adore You!” The prayer can be prayed most thoroughly in the global dimension that Jesus taught: “on earth as it is in heaven.” There is no question of the primacy of this prayer for all believers. The prayer has to be understood. There can be little doubt that Jesus is teaching the Church to pray for the fulfillment of ancient purposes revealed in the Law, the stories, the songs and the prophecies of Israel for the glory of God.

A House of Worship from All Peoples

In His most public hour and most passionate moment, Jesus made an issue of the worship of the peoples. He cleansed the temple of the religious commercialism which formed a blockade prohibiting the nations from approaching God. He quoted Isaiah 56:7, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” The religious leaders listening to Him immediately recalled the rest of the passage that Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 56:6-7. Jesus intended for them to hear it fully:

Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord,…even those I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar. For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.

Just before going to His death, He displayed His life purpose, and the purpose of His soon-coming death (John 12:24-32). He openly considered the option of asking the Father to rescue Him from death: “What shall I say, Father, save Me from this hour?” But instead of asking to escape, He said, “But for this purpose I came to this hour.” What purpose was this? The purpose bursts forth from His heart in His next statement. It becomes the prayer of His death and His life: “Father! Glorify Your name!” And then, to the bewildered amazement of those standing near Him, God the Father Himself answered Jesus from heaven: “I have both glorified it (My name), and will glorify it again.” God’s answer from heaven still thunders, if you can hear it. It is God’s answer to anyone who yields their life to the Father for the greater glory of His name. Jesus said that the answer didn’t come for Him, but for His followers who would come to similar moments of choosing to follow Him (12:30) in accordance with God’s ancient purpose. How would Jesus’ death glorify God’s name? “If I be lifted up, I will draw all people to Myself” (12:32).
Ministry of Surpassing Glory with Paul

Paul saw his life as continuing the ancient purpose toward a huge global outpouring of obedient worship from all nations. His most precise statement of mission purpose was to “bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations for His name’s sake” (Rom 1:5, emphasis mine). Paul saw the entire world as divided into two categories: where Christ was “named” and where Christ was not yet named. Paul resolutely prioritized his efforts so as to labor where Christ was not named (Rom 15:20).

We can see the double direction of God’s glory in Paul’s ministry. On the one hand he labored to glorify God by revealing Christ to the nations—getting Christ “named.” But his highest zeal, the very boast of his being, was in that which was to come back to God from the nations. “Because of the grace that was given to me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the nations, [priesting] the gospel,” that my offering of the nations might become pleasing, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God” (Rom 15:15-17).

Paul’s passionate ambition to “preach the gospel” was based on the far more fundamental commission (or in his language, a “grace that was given”) which he had received from God to “priest the gospel.” There’s no mistaking the imagery. Paul sees himself before God, serving the nations as if he were a priest, instructing and ushering them near to God, helping them bring the glory of their nation to God for His pleasure. Paul’s job was not to change the societies and cultures. The Spirit of God was at work transforming and sanctifying the finest possible display of glory from the peoples.

Paul labored at great cost with a brilliant vision before him. It was something he knew was worth working and waiting for. “With one voice” many diverse streams of believers, Jew and Gentile, weak and strong, will together “glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 15:6).

A Rehearsal for Eternal Glory

At the end of history, we will marvel at how abundantly God’s love has been fulfilled. His love will have triumphed by winning passionate devotion from all peoples. Jesus will have thoroughly fulfilled the promise He uttered to His Father, “I have made Your name known to them, and I will make it known; that the love wherewith You loved Me may be in them…” (John 17:26).

Beyond history, we will have found that all of the worshipful service of the many nations throughout the generations will have been a rehearsal for greater affairs of love and glory, still involving the beautified glory from every people.

Heaven will fill earth: “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His peoples,” and God Himself shall be among them” (Rev 21:3).

The peoples will endure everlastinglign. The city which is heaven on earth will be adorned by kings of the peoples continually bringing the treasure and fruit of the peoples to God’s throne (Rev 21:22-26). We will serve Him, awed and honored by having His very name on our faces. And gazing into His face, we shall serve Him as beloved priests (Rev 22:1-5).

What is an Evangelized World For?

Until now we have cried, “Let the earth hear His voice!” Let us never cease voicing His Word to every creature. But soon comes the day when, by most reckonings, the earth will have heard. What then?

There is another cry, far more ancient. It is a shout for earth’s destiny. It is to be lifted today more than ever: “Let all the peoples praise You!” (Ps 67:3-5). We hear even now growing praise from the nations. Now let us focus our deepest affections and boldest plans on the splendor of every people loving God with the sanctified best of their society. What a magnificent hope!

CHANGES IN PRACTICE

This emphasis on the glory of God is far more than a decorative flower on the Great Commission. More than ever we must work...
Chapter 6 THE STORY OF HIS GLORY

46 together with a shared passion that Christ be named and that Christ is praised in every people. A “doxological” (having to do with glory) vision of world evangelization offers practical wisdom essential for the finishing of the remaining task. Stepping into the story of His glory will help us in three practical ways:

1. Deepen Our Motive Base to a Love for God’s Glory

World evangelization is for God. It is common to work out of a concern for the predicament of people—either to see them saved from hell, or to see them served to communal wholeness, or both. Such compassion is biblical and necessary. However, our love for people takes on balance and power when our overriding passion is for God to be honored by the kindness extended in His name; and even more, for God to be thanked personally by the people transformed by the power of the gospel.

Jesus was moved with an abounding compassion as He saw the multitudes as abandoned sheep, but He did not respond to the naked need. He deliberately recast His vision of the same lost crowds with a different metaphor. Instead of beleaguered sheep, He saw the people as carrying great value to God: “His harvest.” Who can comprehend God’s delight in the fullness of the fruit He receives from people’s lives? Jesus began to do just that. From that vision He implored the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers to bring God His harvest (Matt 9:35-38). Jesus knew that in God’s ways, volunteering comes from an authentic “sending” of God. Compassion flows like rivers from one who is truly sent.

Mission efforts which draw their motivation from compassionate response to human predicament will only go so far. Guilt-based appeals to care for hurting or lost people continue to soften our hearts a little. In practice, however, they weary and harden believers to a minimal token obedience. Costly and difficult work needs to be done. Such labor cannot be sustained by the fleeting, momentary zeal generated by appeals for desperate, perishing souls. God’s global purpose is an ancient affair, far more than an urgent need. Now more than ever believers need to be nurtured into a far-reaching jealousy for God’s glory. With confident certainty that God will fulfill His promise, we can be deeply moved by needs while acting boldly for God’s purpose.

2. Define the Task as Increasing God’s Glory

Never has there been a day when Christians are taking so much care to reach all of the world’s peoples. Considering people groups and their cultures helps to devise effective gospel communication to specific cultures. The people group approach appears to be useful for evaluating progress and apportioning different assignments for effective collaboration.

Even so, the people group approach has been a contentious issue. For years, some have decried the entire approach as disintegrating the unity of churches or as a cover for stubborn attitudes of colonial domination by Westerners. Recently, others have quietly abandoned the people group approach for other paradigms which seem more workable. Even as nation-states disintegrate overnight into the competing peoples that comprise them, country-by-country approaches to evangelization are still proving attractive. Other geographical approaches range from marking urban centers, to drawing windows of longitude and latitude, to mapping spiritual forces arrayed against the gospel. Of course, the peoples of the earth are geographical, urbanized, nationalized entities. We need to take note of these dimensions as important factors in fashioning useful approaches to any people. But our goal must not be reduced to approaching peoples merely to “impact” them as “targets.” We must aim beyond the gospel encounter. We must aim to see obedient worship result for God which may be distinctive to that particular people.

I submit that it is not the people group approach which is important, but the people group result. What is the result of the gospel? Surely something more than every person having a chance to pass verdict on the message. God has promised to get obedient glory for Himself from every tribe and tongue. He yearns for the unique outpouring of love, righteousness, wisdom and worship that can come from every people. This
would be the best rationale for planting indigenous churches. Such a vantage point elevates the distinctive wonder of each people group, and at the same time, enhances the value of extending the gospel breakthrough to every place. Geography matters all the more. Every city and place takes on greater significance as the venue of a unique display of God’s Kingdom.

3. Integrate Efforts For God’s Glory

The obviously false dichotomy of evangelism and social action can be set aside with a doxological approach. Arguments have swirled around which part of man is more important: Is it more important to save a soul or to heal a community? The question is equally repugnant to all. The most common response has been vague generalizations suggesting that we treat the issue as a “both/ and” matter instead of an “either/or” question. We may be able to do better. What if the same issues were resolutely examined and embraced for what comes to God?

Glory comes to God from gospel declaration or a kind deed done in His name. Greater glory resounds when whole communities see Christ’s hand transforming their lives. Some have needlessly proposed a double mandate to fashion a point of balance. The so-called cultural mandate to fill the earth is balanced by the evangelistic mandate to evangelize the world. Is there not a singular purpose of God being served by all the peoples and in all places of the earth? The service of the nations must be a total life obedience of justice and righteousness. The worship offerings now to be brought to God through Christ are words as well as works.

Within the vision for God’s glory lies the substance of true unity between churches. With a jealousy for unique glory to come to God from every people, we can easily set aside demands for uniformity of worship and conduct. We can delight in the variety of styles of righteousness, peace, and joy, while increasing in jealousy for the commonly confessed singular truth in the person of Christ.

End Notes

1. What about the name “Yahweh,” or, as some translations render it, “Jehovah?” It is no doubt an important name. But we must be careful not to regard the living God as actually having a single, legal “real” name, as if He had a birth certificate on file somewhere. The Bible is consistent in urging us to know Him as He aspires to be globally known. The question of Exodus 3:13 was probably not a reference issue (Which god are you representing, Moses?). It was a reputation concern (What kind of track record has this God built for Himself that would move us to commit such a suicidal act of insurrection against Pharaoh? What is the basis of the trustworthiness of God?). It’s possible to understand the tetragrammaton (YHWH) in a verbal sense of “I will cause to be what shall be,” which is perfectly in keeping with a God who is both Creator and promise keeper. The larger context brings emphasis on God’s final answer to the people’s question: “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations” (Ex 3:15).

2. The Hebrew word often translated “ascribe” is a simple word meaning “give.” I use the most literal translation “give” because “ascribe” could make it appear to be an entirely cognitive affair. The context describes this worship as an affair involving gifts from people to God which far surpass mere mental ascriptions.

3. Abram recognized that by God’s promise to bless him and his family, God was virtually constituting a new family. The biblical concept of blessing was loaded with overtones of family honor and heritage. A biblical blessing was often a statement of power which bestowed a destiny. A family blessing often became the most valued feature of an inheritance. Many present-day societies restrict the idea of inheritance to shuffling unspent assets after the death of an ancestor. Biblical inheritance was not considered to be the leftovers from one generation trickling down to be consumed by the next. A blessing was known to be a special heritage for future generations of a family, multiplying with increased abundance. The most astounding feature of the blessing promised to Abram (Gen 12:1-3) was that God was entrusting to him an endowment that was destined to impart something substantial to every single family on the planet, far beyond one extended family.
4. See as well the other variations of the appeal to release the Hebrews which reflect that the general Hebrew word translated “serve” is very much in the context of service of worship (Ex 3:12, 4:23, 5:1, 7:16, 8:27, 29, 10:9). See especially Exodus 10:26 which makes it clear that to “serve” was to offer sacrificial gifts to God.


6. God had given this extensive summary of His dealings as His name at Sinai (Ex 33:19, 34:6-8). It is good news in a capsule about how God does things with people. It is a very significant statement, and was recognized by later generations of Israel as a summary of what was to be proclaimed among the nations (Ps 86:9-15, 145:1-2, 8-12, 21). Jonah himself recognized this package of truth as something that he knew, that he had withheld from the Ninevites (Jonah 3:9-4:2).

7. Don’t take Solomon’s question about God dwelling with people on earth as a word of despair of God ever dwelling with people. His prayer is not intended as a definitive map of the cosmos. It rather fits the self-effacing approach to the Most High. He follows with a profoundly humble appeal, in a most formal framework of courtly language, that the king of all the earth deign to turn his eyes toward a place of encounter and hold audience as he had promised (2 Chr 6:19-21). Compare 2 Chronicles 6:1-2 in which Solomon acknowledges the cloud of God’s glory so filling the temple that no priest could endure the dreadful brilliance (2 Chr 5:13-14).

8. A close look at the context shows what Paul means by Christ being “named.” It was not a matter of the message of Christ being preached once by a missionary, but rather a “foundation” being laid (Rom 15:20). Paul has just been speaking of specific regions in which the gospel is “fulfilled” or brought to a substantial closure (Rom 15:19). Translations such as “fully preached” or “fully proclaimed” stress the cognitive transfer of gospel information far too steeply, especially in light of the full menu of gospel activities just reviewed in 15:18-19. In light of how Paul uses the idea of “foundation” elsewhere (particularly 1 Cor 3:8-15), I conclude that “Christ is named” when there is a growing movement of obedience to Christ established which has proven potential to articulate and demonstrate the life of Christ to its entire community. This is what many would consider a church.

9. Paul uses the idea of a priest and activates it as a verb so that he effectively says that he is “priestling” the gospel. The image is that of a Hebrew priest whose primary task was to help the people present their worship gifts to God.

10. The idea is “toward the face of God” as if in a temple.

11. Some variant manuscripts with good attestation keep the word “peoples” plural in this passage.

**Study Questions**

1. How does prayer, which asks God to sanctify His name work, toward fulfilling an ancient purpose of God?

2. Explain how the fulfillment of the Great Commission will result in worship “from every people.”

3. Explain how worship both reveals God’s glory, and allows God to fully accomplish His love for people.

4. Hawthorne says that the story of the Bible is directed toward God being known and worshiped. Critique his thesis. Is there a coherent story throughout the Bible? Is God’s glory the paramount theme? What other options are there?