

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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Proclamation of the Faith (1 Timothy 3:15-16): Received up in glory

Paul gives us one of the most sublime statements in the whole of the Bible in 1 Timothy 3:16. Let us hear again what 1 Timothy 3:16 says. *“Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.”*

In completing our present series, we are particularly interested today in the occasion when the Lord Jesus left this world to be received back into heaven at the end of His life here upon earth (see Mark 16:19, Luke 24:50-53, Acts 1:9-11). It is summed up in the dramatic phrase, *“received up in glory”* (1 Timothy 3:16).

But, first, before we look at what the words of today’s portion convey, I should like to refresh our minds by a reminder of the earlier events referred to. They were each attended by a display of glory. That is, there was indeed glory manifested in all the phases of the life on earth of the Lord Jesus that we have looked at in previous talks.

God, in the Person of Jesus, Who is the Son of God was:

1. *“Manifest in the flesh”;*
2. *“Justified in the spirit”;*
3. *“Seen of angels”;*
4. *“Preached unto the Gentiles”;*
5. *“Believed on in the world”;* and, then, finally, in today’s text:
6. *“Received up in glory.”*

First, then, relative to God being **“manifest in the flesh”**, we read in Luke 2:14 that after the birth of Jesus as a baby at Bethlehem, there was *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”*

The second statement said that he was **“justified in the spirit”**. Outwardly, there was very little to vindicate the life and service of the Lord Jesus Christ while He was here on earth. However, Matthew 25:31 confirms the glory to be revealed, and which would undoubtedly encourage Him inwardly in His pathway here. *“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.”*

The third statement said that he was **“seen of angels”**. Well might the angels declare Him worthy of glorification! He was One Whose manifestation was no longer an occasional fleeting glimpse, as recorded in The Old Testament. He was now to be looked on continually. As we read in Luke 2:13-14: *“Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”*

Fourthly, when He was **“preached to the Gentiles”**, God was undoubtedly glorified. We read in Acts 13:48: *“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”* This was the result of His coming into the world, brought to its climax at Calvary.

Fifthly, as He was **“believed on in the world”**, God was indeed glorified as Ephesians 1:12 says: *“That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ.”* And in 1 Peter 1:21: *“Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”*

Sixthly, and today’s main study, He was **“received up in glory.”**

This, then, is the climax of that which had been manifested in limited conditions in the other five ways, which were the preliminaries to this.

The Gospel of Mark, in Mark 16:19 records the moment when the Lord Jesus ascended from earth to heaven. *“So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.”* In Mark, the ascension is looked at as God’s seal of approval on the work of God’s perfect Servant. Luke 24:50-53 also records the ascension of the Lord Jesus. In this case, it is God’s tribute to the life of the perfect Man. In Acts 1:9 there is again the clear record of the Lord’s ascension. So, how are we to understand this lovely phrase, *“received up in*

glory”? What is being considered here is not the mere fact of the ascension, but the manner of it. He was received up “in glory”. As we might say, “He was given a glorious reception” as He went back to heaven. Again, a final tribute to the full, final perfect revelation of God given in the Person of God’s glorious Son!

The six things that are said about the Lord Jesus in 1 Timothy 3:16, are more or less sequential. They trace His life on earth from His coming into the world as a baby in Bethlehem to His departure out of the world from the Mount of Olives.

However, careful consideration of these statements highlights a rather strange thing. The purpose of His coming into the world, the climax of His life on earth, His death on the cross at Calvary, and His glorious resurrection, receive no specific mention. Why should this be so?

To me, at any rate, it confirms the whole point of this climactic statement. Down the ages, God has progressively made Himself known. He has now finally and fully revealed Himself in the Person of His well beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Only those who are in the good of His death can fully understand it. His death removed the penalty of sin for all those who trust Him as their Saviour. They believe, quite rightly, that *“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). They have been the recipients of the mercy of God. Their sins are forgiven. Their place in heaven is assured. God has put His Holy Spirit within them to give them an understanding of spiritual things. And all because of the value to God of the death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Notwithstanding all that, the Lord Jesus in Person, and not only His work as such, is the epitome and substance of the revelation of God. He is the living embodiment of all that God is. How privileged we are to be able to take account of such a Person! As we read in Hebrews 1:1-2, *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us in his Son.”*

What response from you and me has God had to this amazing revelation of Himself in the Person of His Son? He can do no more. He has fully, finally made Himself known, in Person, in the Lord Jesus, His well beloved Son. It is now up to us, you and me, to respond to this revelation by trusting the Lord Jesus as our personal Saviour.

The challenge, personal to you and me, is plain. As we read in Romans 10:9, *“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth [Jesus as Lord], and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* Having done that, we are then so to live that other people will themselves be attracted to the Lord Jesus, and trust Him as their own personal Saviour and Lord. What a privilege!

Luke 24:26 affirms the rightness of His ascension, including His glorification, *“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”*

Again, the Apostle John was privileged to record, in John 17:5, the prayer of the Son of God to His Father, *“...And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was...”*

Wonderful! What a story! Glory all the way!

Well, now! That’s that! But, before we finish, we should perhaps give a moment or two to consider the question, what is glory? What is really involved in the term? In addition, to whom or about whom, is the term used?

It is a moot point as to whether we should consider first the “who” before the “what”, or vice versa. On reflection, I think it will be more helpful to begin by considering the Person, and the kind of Person, spoken of in connection with the word “glory” in Scripture. That will condition our thoughts about the term itself. This will help us towards understanding what is involved in glory and the way the term is and should be used.

Consider the following phrases:

- The God of glory;
- The Father of glory;
- The Lord of glory;
- The glory of God;
- The glory of the Father;
- The glory of the Son;
- The glory of the Lord.

These terms express vital names and titles of the Persons of the Godhead, as such, and God the Father, and God the Son personally, as given in Scripture. Only God, as such, and the Father and the Son, as such, are to be the objects of manifest glory and direct worship. That is made known by and in the power of the Holy Spirit. He is not Himself to be the object of manifest glory or direct worship. Knowing that will preserve us from going too far in relation to and in relationship with the Holy Spirit Himself. Scripture is quite plain on these details.

For that reason, glory is not attributed to the Holy Spirit as in a title "The glory of the Spirit." We are, however, told in 1 Peter 4:14, "*the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*" In the context of the Epistle, this would seem to say that true believers might well have to suffer for the Name of Christ, but that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, Christ Himself will be glorified in the suffering of the believers.

The term "the glory of the Spirit" is not found at all in Scripture. Furthermore, Scripture never attributes glory in any way to Satan, the Devil, his angels, or any of his servants in this world.

I trust these comments will help us to understand what is involved in the word "glory" and the proper way in which the term is used.

Now, a few general comments as to the word "glory" itself. This is one of those concepts about which we are tempted to say, "It's better felt than told". Even if that were true, this is one of those occasions when something needs to be said about what we understand to be involved. Let us think about it.

1. Glory in itself

Glory is the outshining of inherent virtue, quality or merit. Glory is resplendent majesty or magnificence. Glory is displayed or manifested excellence. It is therefore used of the nature and acts of God Himself in self-manifestation. That which is in comes out.

To glorify is to magnify, dignify, to declare worthy of fame, and renown; to extol, to praise; to ascribe honour, recognising honourable qualities, attributes or acts. Throughout Scripture, glory is seen to involve esteem, honour, excellency of spirit and soul. In a lesser way, it is occasionally applied to natural, material things, as the glory of the sun, moon, and stars (Psalm 19:1); and thus to man as being made in the image and glory of God (1 Corinthians 11:7).

2. The Glory of God

Glory really belongs to God. He is the God of glory (Acts 7:2 and 2 Corinthians 4:6-15). The glory of God is the revelation and manifestation of all that He is and all that is in Him.

In God, shine in infinite perfection, the divine attributes; it is in the acknowledgement of this and that from Him come all their blessings, that we Christians joyfully ascribe to Him praise, honour, glory, power for ever and ever (Romans 11:36; also Romans 16:27; Galatians 1:5; and 1 Peter 1:7). The same shall eventually be ascribed to the Lord Jesus by every creature (see Revelation 5 and also Philippians 2:10-11).

3. The Glory of God the Father

The name "Father" is often used in Scripture in the sense of source or originator. We are particularly told that God the Father is, among many other things, the "*Father of glory*" (Ephesians 1:17). That is, He is the source and originator of true glory.

Glory may be in the nature of a distinction conferred, as upon a creature by a superior, and even upon the Lord Jesus, Himself, viewed as Man, as on the mount of Transfiguration, and at the right hand of God (1 Peter 1:21; 2 Peter 1:17). This is a distinction in which others may in measure be permitted to share (John 17:22).

4. The Glory of God The Son, the Lord Jesus

It is in the Person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, that the innate glory of the Father is made manifest in perfection and fullness. He is said to glorify the Father (John 17:1 and John 17:4), or, the Father is glorified in Him (John 13:31 and John 14:13).

Glory may properly attach to a person even under an exterior by which it is not expressed. This was evidently the case with Christ when on earth. The flesh He assumed in becoming Man served to veil his glory. In the same way, the glory of the children of God is not yet manifest, and until it is manifest their glory is the experienced exultation of the redeemed heart.

5. Glory - in respect to us

Through grace, believers are received by God. This in itself brings glory to God (Romans 15:7 and 2 Corinthians 4:15).

The glory of God was revealed in the Person and acts of His Son. We have now *"the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (2 Corinthians 4:6). We do well to seek to distinguish in Scripture between His personal, moral and official glories. He is indeed the *"Lord of glory"* (James 2:1).

In the ultimate application of the term, our bodies will be *"fashioned like unto His glorious body"* (Philippians 3:21). The church will soon possess the glory of God (Revelation 21:11), the hope of which she already rejoices in (Romans 5:2). Christ will be the measure of glory then, as He is the measure of grace in us Christians now. For this glorious manifestation of the sons of God all creation eagerly awaits, because that glory will also liberate the groaning creation (Romans 8:19-22).

As we get more acquainted with the term and its use and application, we can well understand that it was entirely proper that, in anticipation of His future day of public glory (Matthew 24:30 and Matthew 25:31), He Himself was indeed *"received up in glory"* when His work on earth was, for the moment, completed.

"How good is the God we adore!"

Joseph Hart (1712-1768)

Well might we cry together, "Glory to His precious Name." Amen.

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