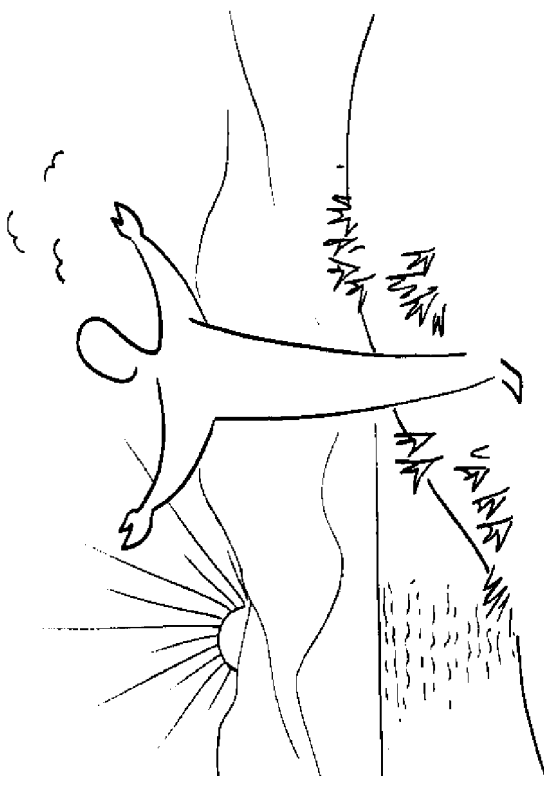


# Show Me Your Glory



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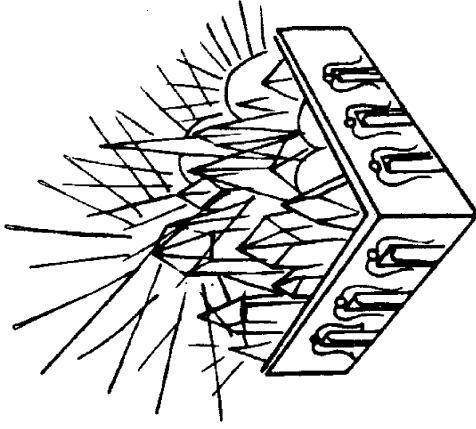
# *Show Me Your Glory*

by Brian Johnston



light, but that shining could not be sustained away from the divine presence. But, ultimately, in the new heaven and new earth everyone and everything will be illuminated by the glory of God which is also the glory of the Lord Jesus, Calvary's Lamb (Revelation 21:23). There will be no need for any other source of light. Believer, the prospect is altogether glorious! Remember again Paul's words with which we opened this chapter: we rejoice in hope of the glory of God - more than that we rejoice in God himself. That's why until the time comes we can rejoice even in tribulation.

*For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of*



*glory far beyond all comparison*  
(2Corinthians 4:17).

# 1. Declared by the heavens

The Earth is nearly 8,000 miles in diameter, and about 25,000 miles in circumference at the equator. Our nearest neighbour, the Moon, is on average about 240,000 miles away. But the distance to the Sun is truly astronomical - 93,000,000 miles.

Now if we take that distance between the Earth and the Sun to be our basic unit of measurement (one astronomical unit or AU) then the most distant planet in the solar system, Pluto, is about 40 of these units from the Sun; and the solar system itself is about 80 units across.

Once we leave the solar system, even that astronomical unit begins to lose meaning as a useful gauge of distance. We have to change gears, so to speak, and start talking about light years: where a light year is the distance that a beam of light (which travels at 186,282 miles per second) travels in a year. By a convenient circumstance the number of inches in a mile (63,360) is very nearly equal to the number of astronomical units in one light year. Remember we're taking the distance between the earth and the sun as one astronomical unit. I'm sorry I'm working in miles if you're used to kilometres - but of course 5 miles is the same as 8 kilometres. So imagine a scale model of our solar system,

with the Earth represented by a tiny speck one inch away from the pin point Sun. The planet Pluto is then a very tiny object about three and a half feet from the Sun. And the nearest star, Alpha Centauri, is another Sun-sized pinpoint more than four miles away. Our own Milky Way Galaxy - even on this scale - is still 100,000 miles across, with the nearest galaxy, Andromeda, over 2 million miles away.

Beyond that, even the scale numbers get out of control. So if we now further reduce the scale model of the Milky Way Galaxy to the point where just one inch represents its actual 100,000 light-year diameter, then we can now place the Andromeda galaxy at about two feet away. On this revised scale the furthest extent of the known universe would now be something like 50 miles away. Well, I'm sure by now your mind will be boggling, but that's only as it should be!

Perhaps you have a backyard telescope or maybe you just search the internet for the beautiful images the Hubble space telescope's been sending back. If it's the latter you may well be awe-struck by the beauty of the horsehead or eagle nebulae - perhaps especially the latter with its characteristic pillars of gas colliding

with dust and producing spectacular light shows. But either way - whether via backyard telescope or using the internet to study images - you may well appreciate the sentiment of the English poet, Edward Young (1683-1765) who said: "An undevout astronomer is mad!" Even those who are least inclined to study the heavens must at times have been stunned by the beauty of a spectacular sunset, especially if we're looking out to sea beyond a quiet coastline. Little wonder the Bible says:

*The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard (Psalm 19:1-3).*

Even without articulate sounds and words the heavens eloquently declare God's glory. Although God's general revelation of his glory through creation can never be put on a par with his special revelation of himself through the Bible, it's still true that both the 'Book of Nature' and the Bible are consistent in declaring the glory of God.

I think it would be true to say that a work of art is the glory of the artist who created it, because it's something which brings glory to him. In his work the artist expresses himself, and the artistic masterpiece honours the artist's skills. I would suggest that's the idea behind the

Bible's statements like: *The heavens declare the glory of God and Man... is the image and glory of God.* The whole creation is a work of art which glorifies God, demonstrating his wisdom and power.

Some of the greatest scientists who studied the heavens were men of great faith in the Creator God who displayed his glory in the heavens. To Kepler, who demonstrated that the earth and the other planets were moving around the sun in orbits that were elongated circles, the universe was a 'sacred sermon, a veritable hymn to God the Creator'. During my own undergraduate studies I recall feelings of something approaching reverence at the elegance of the equations of celestial mechanics. Here's a modern poetic account of creation as scientists imagine it:

...All that exists  
Roars into flame, the tortured  
fragments rush away from  
each other into all the sky, new  
universes  
Jewel the black breast of night;  
and far off the outer nebulae  
like charging spearmen again  
Invade emptiness.

That's quite impressive, but it stands in contrast to the opening words of the Bible's creation narrative:

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)*

Nothing can rival that version of

by being prevented from properly fulfilling the purpose of its existence?", the answer must surely be that the whole magnificent theatre of the universe, together with all its splendid properties and all the varied chorus of sub-human life, created for God's glory, is cheated of its true fulfilment so long as man, the chief actor in the great drama of God's praise, fails to contribute his rational part.' (Charles Cranfield on Romans 8).

And how wonderful it will be when the time comes for Jesus Christ to take his almighty power and reign for a thousand years on this earth! Psalm 72, a psalm of Solomon, gives us a glimpse of what it will be like when an even greater king than Solomon rules the earth. In that day the nations of the earth will be invited to come and see the glory of the Lord at Jerusalem (Isaiah 66:18,19). And included in that vision of peace and righteousness is the picture of abundance of grain in the earth on top of the mountains (v.16).

So it's clear that even this present inanimate creation, which Romans chapter 8 tells us is currently groaning - having been subjected to futility, 'will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God' (Romans 8:21). Natural disasters will be at an end. The ground will again bring forth abundantly as it did before it was cursed on account of man's sin.

One commentator on Romans says: 'And if the question is asked, "What sense can there be in saying that the sub-human creation - the Jungfrau, for example, or the Matterhorn, or the planet Venus - suffers frustration

by being prevented from properly fulfilling the purpose of its existence?", the answer must surely be that the whole magnificent theatre of the universe, together with all its splendid properties and all the varied chorus of sub-human life, created for God's glory, is cheated of its true fulfilment so long as man, the chief actor in the great drama of God's praise, fails to contribute his rational part.' (Charles Cranfield on Romans 8).

So the time is coming, the Bible tells us, when the creation will be cheated no longer, a time when we too, who now fall short of the glory of God, will no longer fall short of giving God the glory he truly deserves. When we're free to glorify God as we ought, the creation itself will share that freedom too.

We began this booklet by thinking about how the created universe declares the glory of God, and now we close with the biblical insight that the creation too will be brought into our glorious freedom - a freedom to glorify God as we ought, the glorious freedom of the children of God. The physical creation, like us, God's new creation, will be released to fulfil its role of glorifying God in far greater measure than before. It's marvellous enough as it is, so again we say: what will it be?

During our study of this subject we've reminded ourselves of the time when Moses came out from the presence of God and his face radiated beams of

of his glory' (Isaiah 6:3). 'How majestic is Your name in all the earth', David the psalmist says (Psalm 8:1,9).

Also, we've seen how God's glory has been uniquely displayed in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word (John 1:14; 2:11), including in his death and resurrection (John 12:23; 17:1).

But one day – yet to come – the curtain will be raised and the glory of God will be fully disclosed. Jesus Christ is going to return and then will take place 'the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus' (Titus 2:13). The experience of Christ's returning presence begins with the 'snatching up' of Christ's Church – all true Christian believers – so that they 'meet the Lord in the air' (1 Thessalonians 4:17). This will be a special time hidden from the eyes of the world as the earth grows ever more corrupt. Then, at a particular moment signalled in advance by God (Matthew 24:27), Jesus' presence with us – his Church – is going to be revealed to the world, and the result of that revelation will be the appearing of the glory of the Lord (Colossians 3:4).

The Bible promise is that believers on the Lord Jesus will not only see his glory, but be changed into it (1 John 3:2; Colossians 3:4), so that Jesus will 'be glorified in his holy people' (2 Thessalonians 1:10). Then redeemed human beings, who were created to be 'the image and glory of God' (1 Corinthians 11:7; Genesis

1:26; 9:6; James 3:9), but now through sin 'fall short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23), will again – and in full measure – share in his glory (Romans 8:17).

I want to emphasize that we, as believers, will not just be spectators of the glory of the Lord – we'll actually participate in it. Not only will we see his splendour, but his splendour or glory will be revealed in us so that we will be transformed by it and will actually become the vehicles by which it is displayed.

Second Thessalonians says that the Lord will be glorified 'in' us. That's the point we're making. Perhaps the idea of a light bulb is a helpful illustration here. It seems as if believers in that coming day will be like a filament. The filament inside an electric light bulb glows with light and heat when electric current passes through it. In other words, the filament itself is changed in the process of giving out light. For when the current is switched on, it becomes incandescent. So when Jesus is revealed in his glory, he will be glorified in his people. We will not only see, but share, his glory. We will, in fact, be more than a filament which glows temporarily, only to become dark and cold again when the current is switched off. We will be radically and permanently changed – we'll be transformed into his likeness! And in our transformation his glory will be seen in us – we'll glow for ever with the glory of Christ

events for majesty and authority. Even in those many scientists who profess no faith there's still a sense of wonder, an aesthetic appreciation at least, about the way things are – albeit one which has not yet found its true focus in God the Creator.

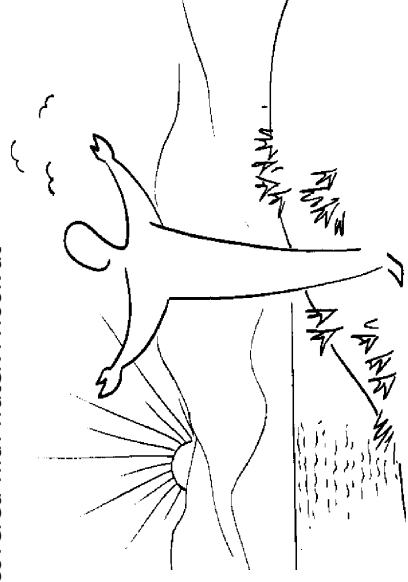
Famous physicist, Paul Davies, says: "There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all ... It seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature's numbers to make the Universe ... The impression of design is overwhelming."

Overwhelming indeed! And it is testimony to the greatness and glory of God, as the apostle Paul points out in Romans 1:20, *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

Paul talks about the world there, and we know about 70% of its surface is covered with water. A look at

something as common as water reveals even more facts which glorify the Creator. A water molecule comprising 2 atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen is V-shaped (H-O-H). The ends of the V-shape, where the two hydrogen atoms are, have a positive charge, while the oxygen end, at the point of the V, is negatively charged. This produces a slight attraction between water molecules so that they are kept close together making water fairly dense – a fact which allows it to be a liquid at room temperature – which is very handy, for otherwise it would be a gas, and this would be a planet without rain, rivers or oceans. But when the temperature drops to freezing, this feature changes and the water molecules rearrange themselves into a hexagonal formation which increases its volume. Surprisingly then, the solid form of water (ice) is less dense than its liquid form – and that's why ice floats on water. If it didn't nothing would survive in a frozen lake!

We could go on to think about the wonder of all the different kinds of animals especially ones like the monarch butterfly with its astounding sequence of genetic reserves – programmed information by means of which the caterpillar is transformed inside the chrysalis into its very



different butterfly form. But space doesn't allow us to explore these other wonders - and anyway it's the heavens which the Bible pinpoints as declaring the glory of God.

So we re-focus our attention on the heavens, just like a US president used to do at the end of a busy day engaged in important affairs of state. It seems he used to like to go outside onto his balcony and stare up at the stars. After a while, he would say: "Now I feel small enough again."

That's the right perspective whenever we rightly appreciate the glory of God by absorbing the magnificence of the universe around us - and it's only a tiny, tiny part that we can see!

To a people whose view of God had grown too small, God recommended star-gazing! He said through his prophet, Isaiah:

*"To whom then will you liken Me That I would be his equal?" ... Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars ...*

*The One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name ...*

*Because of the greatness of His*

*might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing ...*

*Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired*

*His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power (Isaiah 40:25-29)*

And so, in this book, our first glimpse of the glory of God has been through the created universe around us - but these are only the outskirts of his ways as we'll go on to see.

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder Consider all the works Thy hand hath made. I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,

Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee,

How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

(Russian hymn; tr. Stuart K.Hine)

## 7. What will it be?

Let's begin our final chapter in this booklet by letting the apostle Paul remind us of the joy of the Christian life. Three times over he mentions 'exulting' - or rejoicing or boasting - in the first dozen or so verses of Romans chapter 5:

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we **exult [or rejoice]** in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also **exult [or rejoice]** in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us ... And not only this, but we also **exult [or rejoice]** in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*

That last mention is surely the high watermark. What greater rejoicing can there be than rejoicing in God himself? He is the blessed or happy God, the Bible says, and as such is the fountainhead of all true joy. In him, in his presence, the psalmist tells us, there is fullness of joy

(Psalm 16:11).

But what about rejoicing in our tribulations? That's much more of a challenge, isn't it? Some religions offer a philosophy for coping with pain and suffering; but Christianity presents us with the possibility of actually knowing joy through these negative things. But is this realistic? The apostle Paul would unhesitatingly say 'yes'. In fact, he does say so in Second Corinthians chapter 12 where he talks about boasting in regard to his weaknesses (vv.5-10). His painful 'thorn in the flesh' experience had brought about for him a more intimate and triumphant enjoyment of Christ - one which he'd rather not have missed, despite the obvious discomfort of his physical condition.

Working backwards through Paul's mentions of exulting or rejoicing, we now come to deal with the first mentioned - rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. As Paul presents it here by the Spirit of God, the object of our hope is the glory of God - his radiant splendour which in the end will be fully displayed. In previous chapters in this booklet we've thought about how God's glory has already been revealed.

We began by thinking of how his glory is already being continuously revealed in the heavens and the earth (Psalm 19:1). 'The whole earth is full

the same qualities God listed among his moral perfections when responding to Moses' request to see his glory. The gospel message has its source in the lovingkindness of God our Saviour; and it has its basis in the abounding mercy of God; and its

goal is reached by his generous grace. How glorious!  
Our appreciation of it brings us surpassing happiness and supreme benefit. Praise be to God!

## 2. *The focal point of moral perfection*

We begin way back in the days of Moses. He had just led the Israelite slaves out of Egypt towards freedom in the Promised Land.

Not long afterwards came traumatic days in Moses' leadership experience. How could a people who had known the liberating power of God so quickly become impatient and forget? But that's exactly what they did as they encamped around Mount Sinai. Israel turned aside to make a molten calf and declared that this was the god who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt. God informed Moses about these events in the camp down below while Moses was still on the mountain-top receiving from God the stone tablets with the ten commandments. It was then God offered to wipe out the rebellious people in the camp below and start again with Moses himself. Was that intended as a test of Moses' leadership? If so, it was one Moses passed with flying colours. He showed himself not only to be disinterested in personal status but even willing to sacrifice himself for the very people who appeared to take every opportunity to turn against him as their leader. Was this the effect of Moses spending time in

the presence of God? I'm sure it was. God granted Moses' intercession for his people – he would spare them – but the obstinacy of the people made it dangerous for them to live in the presence of God. So God met with Moses far away from the camp. The people watched at a distance. Some leaders might have enjoyed that kind of elitism, but not Moses. Again he interceded on behalf of the people. He appealed to God that the people too might have this same privilege: he appealed that God would journey to the Promised Land in the midst of the camp, not far outside it.

Those are the sorts of prayers God delights to answer. God's positive response again demonstrated his great grace. Not only would the nation be preserved, but God would also journey with them, in their midst. Moses' prayers had been in the first place concerned with God's honour; and in the second place they'd been concerned with the needs of the people. Moses himself had not figured in them – he was the self-effacing leader who put God and his people before himself. But at last Moses' makes a personal request as recorded in Exodus

chapter 33. It's a fascinating one which shows something of his passionate relationship with God: [Moses] said [to God], "Please, show me Your glory."

Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."

And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back: but My face shall not be seen." ...

Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. (Exodus 33:18-34:8)

Moses' request to be shown God's glory was an expression of his passionate heart's longing after God. God's answer is extremely interesting: "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you."

God then fulfilled that promise by going on to proclaim his character to Moses. What does this tell us? It tells us, does it not, that God's glory is to be seen in the moral perfection of his character?

Central to God's description of himself is the characteristic of 'goodness' - a virtue in which God abounds (Exodus 34:6), he tells us. It's as though the moral perfections of the divine being have as their focal point this quality which can be expressed as meaning generosity or grace. God is spontaneously good and generous - this is his very nature. At its heart is the quality that can be described as grace, beneficence, liberality. It would be right to say that generosity is providing what others need to make them happy. The glory of God's character is that it's focused on this desire to provide what it takes to make others happy - at his own expense.

It has been said that 'God's end in all things is His own glory - that He should be manifested, known, admired, adored' but this, theologian Jim Packer has said, should be

seems absolutely thrilled with the sense of glory in this great gospel story. This first section that we have just read majors on the will of God the Father, showing that it's aimed at the glory of his grace becoming the object of our praise - and angels too will praise the glory of God's grace - the grace ...

*which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us... In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.* (Ephesians 1:6-12)

If the first section featured the will of the Father, this second section is characterized by the work of the Son. Again his contemplation of the work of God's Son so thrills the apostle that he exclaims once again that the result of Christ's crosswork, as brought to light in the gospel, is seen in the fact that God's grace will be praised by us. Then Paul comes to the third section where he says ...

*after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in [Christ] with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession,*

*to the praise of His glory* (Ephesians 1:13,14).

Notice how we've had brought before us **the will of God** (Ephesians 1:3-6), then **the work of Christ** (7-12) and now it's the turn of **the witness of the Spirit** (13-14). The glorious gospel involves the work of the triune God, and now for the third time we're reminded of the divine purpose which is that the great gospel story is intended to evoke breath-taking praise for the glorious grace of God that's so evident in the gospel.

In closing, let's take a look at another great biblical description of the gospel - found in Titus chapter 3 - a description which also clearly reveals aspects of God's glory.

*For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs (Titus 3:3-7).*

Did you notice the mention of kindness, of love, of mercy and of grace? These qualities remind us of

Corinthians 4:4). Perhaps we should read the section of the Bible that contains this expression. It's found in Second Corinthians chapter 4:3-6:

*And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world [that's referring to Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

So the Christian message is called the gospel of the glory of Christ. The Son of God who is the subject of this message is himself the outshining of the glory of God (Hebrews 1:3). The glory of Christ is the glory of Deity. In him is displayed the full brilliance of the character and attributes of God, for the writer of the letter to the Hebrews (1:3) says:

*And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*

And he tells us that after he's already told us (v.2) that;

[God] appointed [Christ as] heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

What a glory radiates from God's Son! We say again: the glory of Christ is the glory of Deity.

When the apostle Paul spoke of God shining in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, he was talking about the supreme benefit of our earthly experience, if we believe in the Lord Jesus. The supreme benefit of our earthly experience is this shining in our sin-darkened hearts of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6).

So it doesn't matter whether we're thinking about its content or the end result of believing its message, it remains true that the gospel of God is the story of the greatest manifestation of divine glory.

And that great story began before the world began because Paul writing to the Ephesians (1:4-6) says

[God] chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace ...

Notice those words – to the praise of the glory of God's grace – we'll be hearing them again and again in this passage to the Ephesians. Paul just

balanced by a recognition that through setting his love on men and women God has voluntarily bound up his own final happiness with theirs (J.I.Packer in *Knowing God*). I had never thought of it quite like that before, and when I first came across the idea expressed that way I found it a staggering thought: that God should make his own happiness to be dependent on ours. But the more I think about it, the more biblical it seems to be. Let's think about it together for a moment because it's an expression of the generosity that's central to the glorious moral perfection of our God.

We certainly find the prophet Isaiah saying (Isaiah 63:7-9):

*I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us – yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.*

*He said, "Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me"; and so he became their Saviour.*

*In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them.*

*In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. (NIV)*

In all their distress he too was

distressed'. So we're clearly told that when God's people were distressed, God himself was distressed. That seems like a negative way of saying that God's happiness is bound up with his people's happiness. In the generous giving of his Son God has provided all we need to become holy – which is to be like God himself – the God who is described in the Bible as the 'blessed' or 'happy' God. The Bible's longest psalm begins by saying: *How blessed are those whose way is blameless* (Psalm 119:1) – or in other words: 'how happy are the holy'. So God, in Christ, has provided for our eternal happiness by meeting our need for holiness.

A positive example of God being happy when his people are happy is found in Zephaniah:

*"The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." (Zephaniah 3:17 NIV)*

God takes great pleasure – he actively delights - in those who seek him humbly and trust him for salvation. The wonderful message is God has shown himself 'mighty to save' through Jesus Christ. Once you've come to Christ in simple faith, you belong to him and the verse illustrates the Lord's calm, silent joy in the possession of the object of his love, too great for words to express. *"The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save.*

*He will take great delight in you,  
he will quiet you with his love, he  
will rejoice over you with  
singing."*

Surely it shows how delighted or happy God is with those who have joyfully embraced his salvation. This is wonderful grace! It really is glorious! Remember that central to all God's glorious virtues is his grace.

The focal point of all his moral perfections is his generosity – which is precisely what provides for our true happiness! Then, if we are happy, God is happy too!

Little wonder Moses bowed his head and worshipped! That's the effect this manifestation should have on us too! (See Exodus 34:8).

## 6. Our supreme benefit through the gospel

The appreciation of the glory of God brings happiness of a surpassing order.

Jude (v.24) says of God that he is the God *who is able ... to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.*

Looking forward to great joy – that's a wonderful prospect for the Christian believer on the Lord Jesus Christ! Jude speaks of the exceeding joy that will be the experience of those who in the coming day will be set before the presence of God's glory (Jude 24). Notice that joy is found in the presence of his glory.

But before that experience can be ours, we need to obey the call of God through the Gospel. To those who have obeyed the gospel call by repenting and believing the good news of Jesus Christ, Peter describes God as

*the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ* (1 Peter 5:10).

So that's the end in view: sharing eternal glory in Christ.

It's Stephen, the first Christian martyr, who tells us that it was the God of glory who appeared to Abraham while he still lived in Mesopotamia (Acts 7:2). The God of glory who, four

thousand years ago, called Abraham to a new life of faith is the same God who still calls to men and women today. It is the God of glory who calls us through the Gospel! This realization should have a great effect on us – the God of glory is calling us – 'by his own glory and excellence' (2 Peter 1:3) - to share eternal glory with himself!

Saul of Tarsus had been stopped in his murderous tracks on the road to Damascus by a glorious light even more brilliant than the noonday sun. Later, as the apostle Paul, he spoke of how after that time he'd been entrusted with *the glorious gospel of the blessed God* (1 Timothy 1:11).

The gospel, the Christian message of good news through Jesus Christ, can well be described as glorious. For both the aim of all gospel preaching and the subject of the gospel is the glory of God. We've seen how the aim of gospel preaching is the glory of God because of the fact that believing the gospel will enable us to become a sharer in God's eternal glory in Christ. Now let's explore how the glory of God is also the very subject of the Christian message of good news.

The Bible also describes the gospel as the gospel of the glory of Christ (2

I believe it's the correct emphasis – we see that this crowning with glory and honour relates to the Lord's life on earth, and doesn't refer to after his resurrection. You may well ask: 'How was this glory and honour seen in the Lord's earthly life?' To answer, we only need to state the facts. He was with the wild beasts in the desert (Mark 1:13); he made water into wine (John 2); he calmed the wind and waves (Luke 8:24); he walked on the sea, putting it under his feet (John 6:19); he compelled a fish to bring him a coin (Matthew 17:23); he multiplied fish and bread to feed a crowd (John 6); he withered a barren fig tree with a word (Mark 11:13); he healed leprosy, paralysis, blindness and deafness; he commanded demons and they obeyed him; he raised the dead; when he was born a star appeared, when he died the sun disappeared. And all this alongside the moral excellencies we've thought of. As one commentator has summed it all up: 'Only by the life of One so crowned with glory and honour could the dominion be restored to man' (J.M.Flanigan, *WTBT-Hebrews*,

Ritchie) - he was referring, of course, to the original God-given dominion over creation which was frustrated by the fall in the garden of Eden.

That verse in Hebrews which we've just been considering brings us to the death of Christ. And in his death and resurrection there was a glory displayed which could not be hidden. At Calvary, we see the glory of God - in terms of his wisdom, power, righteousness, truth and love - all exquisitely displayed. To remind ourselves of that we would only need to read again the letter to the Romans chapters 3 through 5. And so what a tremendous answer to the Lord's prayer (in John 12:28) shortly before he went to the cross:

*"for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name."*

In concluding this section, we repeat what has been said by another, and said well, that:

'In heaven, where these things are better understood, angels and men unite to praise 'the Lamb that was slain" (JIP, *Knowing God*, p.221).

### 3. The antidote to faltering feet

In the Old Testament the various appearances of the glory of the LORD are related to one of two things. We find God's glory appearing as a restraint to wickedness (Exodus 16:7,10; 24:16,17; Numbers 14:10; 16:19; 20:6). We also find it elsewhere being used by God to give a strengthening sense of his approval. In this chapter, let's take the first of these. We'll study together occasions when God's glory appeared in order to restrain unrighteousness among the people of God.

Our first reading is from Exodus 16:

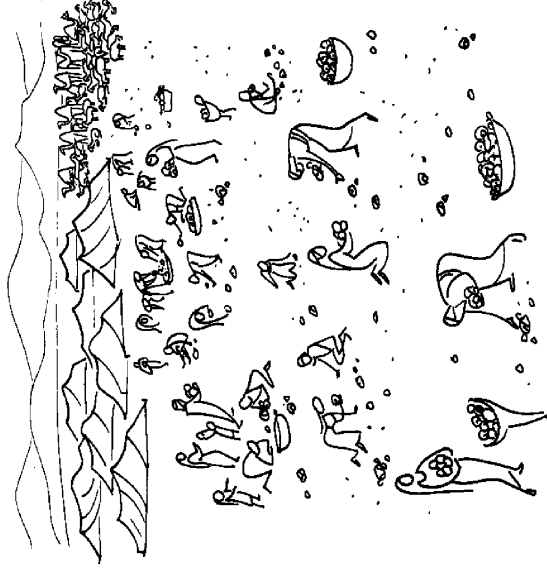
*On the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The sons of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the LORD'S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full ..."*

*Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you ..."*

*So Moses and Aaron said to*

*all the sons of Israel, "At evening you will know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt; and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, for He hears your grumblings against the LORD ... Moses said, "This will happen when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning; for ... Your grumblings are not against us but against the LORD."*

*... It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.*



*And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "I have heard the grumblings of the sons of Israel; speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"*

*So it came about at evening that the quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground ...*

*And Moses said to them, "It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat." (Exodus 16:1-15)*

This illustrates what we were saying in opening that sometimes God's glory appeared in Old Testament times to rebuke sin among the people. On this occasion it was the sin of grumbling against the LORD.

But do you think their view of the divine glory that day consisted only of the sight of the cloud? Verse 10 tells us that was definitely part of it for 'the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud'; but did their vision of God's glory extend beyond that to their perception of his grace in the provision of food each morning and evening? In the flow of the passage we've read, I'm tempted to suggest both were included. In the morning they were to see the glory of the LORD, and that's when they would be given bread to the full. For judgement tempered with God's merciful

provision that day showed the true glory of God's grace.

That's all the more true, of course, when we think of how the manna bread which Israel ate in the desert was a glorious foreshadowing of the one who had come from heaven to earth, not to condemn, but to provide salvation for all who will personally receive it in accordance with God's instructions.

It was Jesus himself who, referring to that very same manna bread in the desert, taught in John's Gospel chapter 6 that there is 'bread' which comes from heaven and gives life to the world (v.33); and that it's to be identified with himself [Jesus] (vv.35,48,50). For Jesus Christ said: "I am the bread of life." What's more, this Bread of Life requires to be 'eaten' (vv.51-56). By that, of course, is meant that such 'eating' is to be done spiritually (v.63). What ordinary food is for our body, Jesus is for our inner self. And by analogy: 'eating' is 'believing'. Jesus went on to say:

*"The bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh."* In other words, he was going to give himself as the sacrifice for sin by offering up the life of his human nature. So to believe in Christ means to receive him by faith as the crucified one. Apart from his sacrifice Christ ceases to be 'bread' in any sense. God's provision for our souls in terms of spiritual and eternal life is in Christ and him crucified. We receive Christ spiritually by faith to

Jesus Christ' (2 Corinthians 4:6).

The same disciple John who said:

*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth*

also went on to say:

*For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)*

Two historical events are being compared there: the historical giving of the Law and the historical beginning of Christianity. The LORD God had responded to Moses' request to allow him to see his glory by passing in front of him and proclaiming: 'the LORD ... [is] ... gracious ... and abounding in truth'. The full revelation of grace and truth, however, awaited the coming of Christ. Jesus Christ appeared on the stage of human history to publish fully for the first time in the world of men and women 'the grace' and 'the truth' – that is, all that is grace and truth in the fullest sense - such things were previously only glimpsed through the Law.

Then in the next verse John says:

*No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. ( John 1:18 NAS)*

Our minds go back again, I'm sure, to Moses, who was only permitted to see the back part of some

manifestation of God. Here Christ's deity is emphasized as a result of his being described as 'the only begotten God'. Then when John goes on to write 'who is in the bosom of the Father' we seem to be given the impression there's a timelessness about this which underscores an eternal quality of relationship which even our Lord's historic entering into humanity couldn't change. And finally in that verse 18 of chapter one, and concerning the incarnate Christ, John says 'he has explained Him' – and there John used the word for the interpretation of sacred writings. His point is clear – that Jesus Christ is God's Expositor of himself to us; he's God's self-interpretation of himself to us in humanity. And so John's wonderful Prologue to his Gospel ends – and, as with Moses at that other beginning, we, too, I'm sure, bow low and worship.

Well, we began our look at God's glory - as seen in Christ - with a look at Philipians chapter 2 verse 7. I'd like to close today with another chapter 2 verse 7 reference – but this time from the letter to the Hebrews, where we read 'You have crowned him with glory and honour'. Verse 9 expands on this and tells us: Jesus ...

*was made for a little while lower than the angels ... because of the suffering of death - [and it goes on to tell us, he was] - crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.*

When the verse is read like that – and

from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

But I don't think John's experience in that verse was limited to that fleeting glimpse of visible splendour afforded on the Mount of Transfiguration. There were many other times in the Lord's public ministry when his companions could see very clearly that Christ possessed the essential glory of divine attributes like omniscience, and omnipotence; because he knew the thoughts of the heart, and could do the things he did. The miracles he performed revealed the glory that was normally veiled here on earth.

The disciples are said to have witnessed the first manifestation of this glory at Cana, when the "simple wedding guest" did to water what only almighty God could do. Six other similar manifestations deeply impressed John and he dealt with each in his Gospel. To him they were

signs of the essential glory of God - seen in the Lord Jesus, and unique to deity.

But there were other equally essential features of the Lord's glorious person which were always apparent to his amazed disciples; I'm referring to the Lord's great moral excellencies. The Gospels illustrate the very same qualities of divine glory which God declared to Moses (in Exodus 34:6,7) - for the qualities of Christ seen through the Gospel records are equally compassion, grace, slowness to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and truth, as well as forgiveness.

Writing years later, John tells of the earliest and perhaps deepest impression which his Master made on him: it was that "God is light" (1 John 1:5). The sinless purity of the Lord profoundly affected not only John but the other disciples too. Simon Peter expressed it this way, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). They had

seen in him **the glory of sinlessness**. They watched his sympathetic handling of the multitudes and saw **the glory of compassion**. They were amazed at his gentleness towards those who were slow to learn, and in it they saw **the glory of patience**. They saw the affection which he poured out on his tormentors and saw **the glory of love** ... This was 'the glory of God in the face of

have eternal life; just as ordinary bread is taken in physically (by eating) to sustain everyday life.

But we must leave further thoughts of Christ and the Gospel as expressing the glory of God to later in this booklet. Let's return to our theme: which is when the appearances of God's glory in Old Testament times related to occasions when wickedness had to be checked among his people.

The next incident we'll mention is the giving of the Law. For the Law was given through Moses to check unrighteousness or wrongdoing. And it came amidst a display of the glory of God. For we read in Exodus 19 that on the *third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder.*

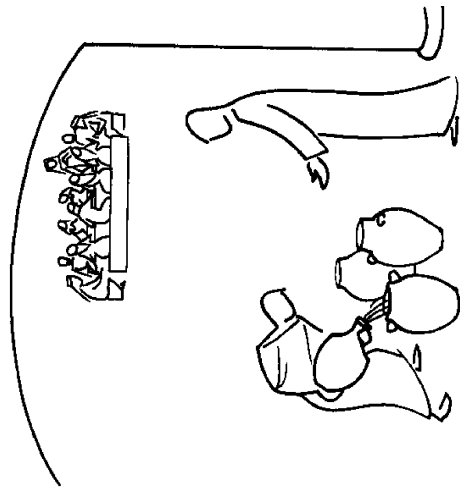
*The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. (Exodus 19:16-20)*

It was then God thundered his ten

commandments. There was something of the glory of God on view that day, especially for Moses. The apostle Paul later said: *The ministry of condemnation has glory* (2 Corinthians 3:9). The Old Covenant between God and Israel, and in particular the Law, was a ministry of condemnation, for it condemned sin. It's clear that Paul was thinking of how Moses' face still shone with the reflected glory of God when he came out from the glory cloud that covered the mountain (2 Corinthians 3:7).

Over time that glorious reflection in the skin of Moses' face faded away - a fading glory associated with a covenant which itself was designed to fade away and be replaced (2 Corinthians 3:10-13). But in 2 Corinthians, chapter 3, Paul makes a great contrast between this and the New Covenant whose servants - faithful believers on the Lord Jesus - are to experience an increasing glory; for they are *beholding the glory of the Lord ... [and] being transformed into the same image from glory to glory* (v.18). 'From glory to glory': that is, increasing by one glorious degree after another into the glory of Christlikeness. Interestingly, the New Covenant is characterized here not by the letter of the Law but by the Spirit of God who is of course the Spirit of Glory (1 Peter 4:14) - the very one who convicts of sin.

Finally, in our Old Testament survey of appearances of the glory of God, we come to Numbers 16 when *Korah ... with Dathan and Abiram ... took*



*action, and they rose up before Moses, together with ... two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation ... and said to them, "... why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" ...*

*Moses said to Korah, "You and all your company be present before the LORD tomorrow ... Thus Korah assembled all the congregation against them at the doorway of the tent of meeting. And the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation. Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them instantly." ...*

*But on the next day all the congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You are the ones who have caused the death of the LORD'S people." It came about, however, when the congregation had assembled against Moses and Aaron,*

*that they turned toward the tent of meeting, and behold, the cloud covered it and the glory of the LORD appeared. (Numbers 16:1-3; 16-21; 41-42)*

I'd like you to notice how the glory appeared at exactly the time the grumblers gathered themselves together to oppose Moses. What does this tell us? Is it not this: that a vision of God's glory is the antidote to grumbling. Some of them had gone too far - for them God would be glorious in judgement. But they would never have been gathered there in the first place had they not previously lost sight of the glory of God. The lesson for us, I suggest, is clear: if we grumble it means we're losing sight of the glory of God. Whatever causes us to lose sight of God's glory will hinder our progress. So let's beware: for whenever the glory dims for us then our steps, too, will begin to falter.

## 5. Veiled in the incarnate Christ

In this booklet on the glory of God, we've already seen that the essence of God's glory expresses itself in his generous provision for the welfare of others. With that linking thought as our introduction, let's read in Philipians 2:4-8:

*Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Have you thought of what it was that the Lord Jesus emptied himself of when he, as the eternal Word, became flesh? Did he experience a reduction of some of his divine qualities to allow himself to be limited in space and time? Some have thought that, but that's reading too much into the text. The Lord Jesus was no less God when he became also man. The Bible says that the fullness of the Godhead – that is, the sum total of the divine

powers and attributes – was resident in him bodily (Colossians 2:9). So then, what does it mean that the Lord 'emptied himself'? A better answer is that the Lord emptied himself of the visible glory and dignity he had previously shared with the Father before his incarnation. Remember how Jesus prayed to his Father in John chapter 17:4,5:

*"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."*

The Lord Jesus clearly referred to a glory he had known with the Father from before the world was in existence and which was not evident at that time during his days here on this earth. The visible splendour which had shone from him while he occupied heaven's throne was laid aside while he was here on earth, though for a short while the three favoured disciples were given a view of it on the Mount of Transfiguration. Perhaps that occasion was in John's mind when he wrote near the beginning of his gospel:

*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten*

spiritual house today? For New Testament writers, such as the apostle Peter, tell us that God's intention was – and remains throughout this age of grace – that he (God) should have 'a spiritual house' where obedient believers are seen as 'living stones': their lives of service together patterned after the commands of the apostles found in the New Testament, so that they might form a 'habitation for God in the Spirit' on this earth (Ephesians 2:20-22). No longer one geographical place, but one spiritual unity.

After all the Lord Jesus had prayed that those who believed through the word of the apostles might be together as one, and he added in John's Gospel 17 verse 22 in his prayer to his Father,

*"the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one".*

Evidently, there was a glory associated with the Father and the Son in their unity, and this was the glory Jesus was imparting to these men and women who were to stand together early in the first century as his witness-bearers. On that memorable day, recorded in Acts chapter 2, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit - 'the Spirit of Glory' (1 Peter 4:14) as he's called - and that

as showing God's approval. So once again in a very wonderful sense "the glory of the LORD filled the house", for that company became that very day "a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22).

Concerning this collective indwelling of the presence of God there was this visible evidence - not now a luminous glory cloud, but the transformed lives of the Spirit-filled disciples who were gloriously united together forming God's house. And so there was indeed imparted the glory of unity the Lord Jesus had been praying for in John chapter 17.

'What impact should this have on our service?' In the glory so strongly connected in the Bible with God's house on earth we've emphasized the idea of divine approval and divine strengthening. Was not the apostle Paul's prayer for the church of God in Colosse that they be:

*Strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience (Colossians 1:11; See also Ephesians 3:16; 1:18).*

It's as though the glory of God is to us as the mainspring of a conventional watch. Our energy for service in God's house will be in proportion to our experience of the might of his glory.

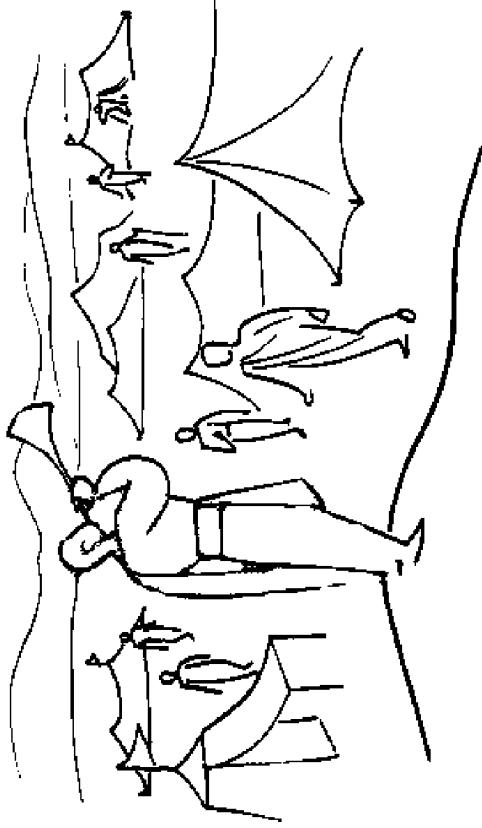
## 4. Visible in God's House

A book I'm currently reading to my son as part of his bedtime routine has an unusual feature. It consists of a repetitive style of writing whenever the author wishes to build up the suspense. A significant sentence is followed by another which comprises only the main part of the preceding sentence – but using the exact same wording. Then that, in turn, is followed by often a one word sentence containing a further repetition of the main verb. It breaks all the rules of English grammar, but, I must say, it's pretty effective at grabbing your attention.

Now it seems to me that something similar to that takes place at one point at least in the Bible. I'd like to read to you the passage of the Bible I have in mind because it's relevant to our subject. It has to do with the cloud which indicated God's presence to the Israelites, guiding them as they travelled through the desert en route to the Promised Land. When they camped this was the cloud which remained above – and covered – the tabernacle which was God's dwelling place among his people. The glory of God shone out of this cloud. As we read about it in Numbers chapter 9, I'd like you to particularly notice the amount of repetition.

*Now on the day that the tabernacle*

*was erected the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony, and in the evening it was like the appearance of fire over the tabernacle, until morning. So it was continuously; the cloud would cover it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. Whenever the cloud was lifted from over the tent, afterward the sons of Israel would then set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the sons of Israel would camp. At the command of the LORD the sons of Israel would set out, and at the command of the LORD they would camp; as long as the cloud settled over the tabernacle, they remained camped. Even when the cloud lingered over the tabernacle for many days, the sons of Israel would keep the LORD'S charge and not set out. If sometimes the cloud remained a few days over the tabernacle, according to the command of the LORD they remained camped. Then according to the command of the LORD they set out. If sometimes the cloud remained from evening until morning, when the cloud was lifted in the morning, they would move out; or if it remained in the daytime and at night, whenever the cloud was lifted, they would set out. Whether it was two days or a month or a year that the cloud lingered over the tabernacle, staying above it, the sons*



*of Israel remained camped and did not set out; but when it was lifted, they did set out. At the command of the LORD they camped, and at the command of the LORD they set out; they kept the LORD'S charge, according to the command of the LORD through Moses.* (Numbers 9:15-23)

I believe certain abridged versions of the Bible summarize that in a few words. But if you believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, you would hardly dare to be so bold. The better approach is to say: "Hey, this is unusual, why is the LORD repeating this so often? There must be a very important lesson here - both for them and for us."

After a little thought, I suggest the lesson is clear. It has to do with God's authority. The Israelites didn't move or rest up whenever they felt like it. At times they might have no sooner set up camp than they would have to get

moving again because the cloud of God's presence had lifted up from the tabernacle and was going ahead of them once more. I'm sure at times there must have been grumbles of discontent because all the starting and stopping was confusing or didn't happen to be convenient in specific family circumstances. No more can we understand at times the timing of God's will in our lives - why things are allowed to happen when they do. It's then we'd better remember the repetition here, and that our service is all about God's commands, not our own convenience.

While we're on this topic of our obedience to God's leading in our lives, there's another important repetition - this time in Exodus chapter 40. It's there we read no less than seven times that in things related to the tabernacle Moses did exactly 'as the LORD commanded Moses'. It was precisely that quality

of faithful adherence to God's instructions on the part of Moses that led to the glory cloud crowning the finished work of God's house on earth in the midst of his chosen people. That repetition then is for us now because God's principles don't change and if we want to be with others serving God on earth where his presence can be specially known in his spiritual house then we, too, need to do all he's commanded us in his Word.

Having made that point, let's move on to other points related to our theme of God's glory. In the last chapter we observed that in the Old Testament God's glory is related to one of two things - it's either connected with the restraint of wrongdoing or else it's associated with God's approval in a way which leads to the strengthening of God's people. We're on the theme of God's approval at this point.

We've already talked about the tabernacle, and that's not by coincidence, for God's house or temple on earth in any age is supremely the place of his glory (see Exodus 29:43; 40:34; Leviticus 9:23; 1 Samuel 4:21; Ezekiel 10 & 43; Haggai 2:7; Revelation 15:8).

As Psalm 29 says:

*The voice of the LORD makes the deer to calve And strips the forests bare; And in His temple everything says, "Glory!"*

That was perhaps never more

graphically demonstrated in the Bible than at the dedication of the first Jerusalem Temple by king Solomon. In the first book of Kings, chapter 8, we read:

*And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel ... were ... sacrificing so many sheep and oxen they could not be counted or numbered. Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house ... It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud.*

As David again says in another of his psalms (26:8):

*O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house And the place where Your glory dwells.*

We said earlier that God's house on earth in any age is supremely the place of his glory - and that's what these verses we've read bear out. But you say, that's all very well in days when God's house on earth was a physical structure of some sort, and people could see a luminous cloud as the evidence that God's presence was known there in a special way at that place, the one place he had endorsed for worship. But is there any way in which the glory is visible in God's