

THE LION-LAMB'S GLORY - REV. 5:12 #6

John Glenn will always be remembered as the pilot of the first manned spacecraft that orbited the earth. That space ship named *Friendship 7* completed its 3 orbit mission some 162 miles from the earth's surface at approximately 17,500 miles per hour in just under 5 hours. Today with all of the space travel that has been accomplished, Glenn's flight seems tame, but at the time it was revolutionary. After John Glenn was picked up after his pioneer space flight, he testified that his experience had strengthened his belief in God. Glenn is not alone. There is something about the awesomeness of the universe that has sparked faith among many of our astronauts.

*The Apollo 8's crew read the creation account from Genesis while orbiting the moon.

*The first liquid that was poured and the first food eaten on the moon were the juice and bread of communion that Buzz Aldrin consumed.

*Tammy Jernigan openly spoke of her Christian faith in a live shuttle broadcast.

*Jim Irwin became an evangelist after his space career was over.

*In fact, most of the astronauts have openly admitted without prompting, many in hearings before Congress, that their faith in God was strengthened by their flight into space.

John Glenn seemed to sum it all up in a live news conference from the shuttle, *Discovery*, when he said, *To look out at this kind of creation and not believe in God is to me impossible.*

Of course, we shouldn't be surprised that those who have experienced space firsthand have been overwhelmed by the glory of God because under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David wrote in Psalm 19:1, *The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of His hands.*

One of the most difficult feats for us to accomplish in our lives here on this earth is to capture the full glory of God in our minds and hearts. In fact, it is more than just difficult - it is really impossible. For from our earthly vantage point with only our earthly experiences, we can never at this time fully grasp how glorious God in heaven really is.

The Apostle John was transported in a vision up into heaven. We have been looking at his experience as recorded in Revelations 4 and 5 during these past Sunday mornings. One of the overwhelming impressions that John had was the awesome glory of God. 4 times in these 2 chapters, John speaks of God's glory.

Revelation 4:9-11 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

And then in Revelation 5:12 and 13, the glory of God is again brought forth.

Revelation 5:11-13

¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne

and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

Now it shouldn't surprise us that the Apostle John was so overwhelmed by God's glory and the angelic choir continuously sang of God's glory for the Bible tells us that God's glory fills heaven. But from our limited vantage point here on this earth, we just can't even imagine that.

Let me just illustrate the problem that we face briefly. Suppose our church sent you on a mission to one of the most remote tribes in the world. After you had learned the language of these people who live in grass huts without any of the modern conveniences that we have, you happened to mention that you missed your electricity back home and they asked you *what is electricity?* How would you describe this electricity that they have never experienced in words that they would totally understand?

Well, you might begin by talking about trees that have all the branches cut off placed at regular intervals along the side of the paths that you walk on back home.

Then you might go on to mention something like vines that are suspended from one of the branchless trees to another. And finally, one of these vines is attached to the roof of the house where you live and through the roof to a little round ball that you can see right through. And then you might speak of a spark or maybe a

little flash of light or fire that is sent from one end of the vine all the way through the vine until it came into your house and lit up that little round ball until it became like a little sun, giving out light so that you could see in your house even when it was dark outside.

Now let me ask you a question? Have you really fully explained electricity? Of course not. You haven't even spoken about AC or DC current, you haven't defined Ohms or Watts, you haven't even touched on how generators work. You have just tried the best that you can to describe a phenomenon that is completely foreign to the experience of these people in words that are familiar to them so that they can begin to understand what you have experienced. It's not that these people's minds are not intelligent enough to understand AC and DC current and Ohms and Watts - these are very intelligent people. Some of them would laugh at the way our hunters are going to dress up in their orange outfits with scoped shotguns to go out and hunt deer this weekend. The best of the tribal hunters could probably walk out into the woods with a spear and sneak right up onto a deer and throw the spear right through the deer's heart. They would consider the best hunter that we could offer a very awkward hunter indeed. But they have never experienced electricity. They have never seen a light bulb turn on. So it is difficult, almost impossible for them to even imagine this happening.

Can you begin to see the problem that the Biblical authors who were privileged to have a vision of heaven had in conveying what they saw and experienced to those of us who have only experienced this earthly realm? How could they begin to explain the awesome glory of God using human language? It's

no wonder that they grope for words to express themselves. At the conclusion of his heavenly vision, the Prophet Ezekiel wrote these words as recorded at the end of the first chapter of the book that bears his name, *This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell facedown.* This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord - can't you just see Ezekiel groping for words to express what he has just seen?

Now the Apostle John had the same problem in Revelation 4 and 5. I mean, he is using everything imaginable to describe the glory that he is seeing. He uses all kinds of gems and jewels to describe the colors and brilliance, he uses a rainbow, he speaks of flashes of lightning and roars of thunder, he speaks of all kinds of unique creatures with multiple wings and eyes, he tries to describe the song of tens of thousands of angels - I mean, he must have finished and shook his head and said *this doesn't even begin to describe the awesome glory of this lamb who looks like he has been slain but roars like a lion.* That's the reason for his using terms like *appearance* and *resembling* and *likeness* and *looked like* throughout his account.

Now realizing this, that the Biblical writers were at such a loss to describe the awesome greatness of God's glory, it is a great temptation to not even make an attempt - to just say let's wait until we get to heaven so that we can experience God's glory personally. But then the command that we read earlier in our Scripture reading comes hauntingly into our minds. *Declare God's glory among the nations . . . ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name.* One of our jobs as Christians is to recognize the glorious nature of our God and to reflect that glory to

others in witness. How do we do that? How can we proclaim God's glory when we have so much trouble having a complete concept of it ourselves?

Well, I believe that the word that is translated *glory* helps us here. For this term has 2 major meanings - and each of these meanings helps us to see a way in which we can give glory to the Lion-Lamb.

1. The first meaning of the word *glory* is an opinion or judgment. It comes from the same root term as the Greek words meaning *to believe* or *to think*. To give glory to someone or something is to have a correct opinion of it, to judge it properly, to believe or think rightly about it. So the first way in which we give glory to God is to have the right opinion of God, to believe or think correctly about God.

Now it is critically important that we see this for one of the major temptations that God's enemy has used down through the history of the human race is to lure people of all races and nations into making gods in their own image. It is just as natural for a person to believe that there is a god as it is for a baby to recognize his mother. So the Devil soon realized that he could only lure a small fraction of human beings into actually denying the existence of God. I mean only a fool believes that there is no God according to the Bible. But the same end could practically be achieved if he could tempt people into believing a false god. And it was almost the natural expression of the prideful human nature to desire to make a god in their own image and then worship it. So down through the history of the human race, culture after culture have made gods in their own image and then worshiped them, and the result of this has been to rob God of the glory that is

rightfully due Him.

*What did the Canaanites desire? They wanted good crops and the opportunity to fulfill their lustful desires. So they imagined gods that controlled the storm and the sun and the growth of the crops and they worshiped these gods with sensually immoral practices.

*What did the Greeks and Romans desire? They desired power and control so that they could control the whole world. So they imagined gods that were supermen and then worshiped these gods with prideful practices.

*What do most Americans desire today? They desire luxury and happiness in life. So most Americans have imagined a god who just can't help but give his people everything that they want and looks the other way when his children indulge themselves in sinful pleasures.

*But these gods are not the true and living God of the Bible. They are gods of human imagination. So the true and living God is robbed of the glory that is rightfully due Him. The first step in giving glory to God is to have the right opinion of Him, to believe or think correctly about Him.

*What is the true and living God of the Bible like? The Bible says that He is a God who is absolutely perfect in His character. He is a God who is totally unlimited in all of His being. He is a God who is the standard of all that is right and wrong. He is a God of infinite love and compassion. But He is also a God who cannot tolerate sin or evil. He is a God who in his grace and mercy has provided a way for sinners to be forgiven by giving His one and only son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come to this earth and pay the penalty for man's sins. But He is a

God who by His very nature must demand full payment for sin. He is a God who has provided the way and salvation and insists that it is the only way. He is a God who cannot allow humans to come to Him on human terms, but must insist upon full cleansing from sin that can only be achieved through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, *I am the door, any person who enters through me will be saved* in John 10. Later in his gospel, John recorded Jesus as saying, *I am the way, the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me (John 14:6).*

Now to imagine or worship any other God but the true and living God is to rob him of His glory. For part of giving glory to God is to have the right opinion of Him, to believe or think correctly about Him.

2. But let's move now to a second thought. The second meaning of the word *glory* is great splendor or brightness. To have glory is to have magnificent majesty.

*The term, *glory*, is used in this way sometimes in the Bible to describe the splendor and brightness of the sun and the stars.

*The term, *glory*, is used in this way sometimes in the Bible to even describe the splendor or majesty of an earthly ruler who has a magnificent kingdom.

*But when it is used of God, this term, *glory*, describes a most exalted, preeminent splendor or brilliance that cannot even be imagined by the human mind - the splendor or majesty of the creator and sovereign ruler of the entire Universe.

*This is a glory that we presently cannot bear to see. As much as God desires fellowship with His creatures, in our present, limited earthly state, we could not

physically endure a full exposure to God's glory. Our eyes would be immediately blinded; our senses would be so overloaded that our minds would be blown; our hearts would stop beating with the shock of the exposure.

*Perhaps you recall the scene in the O.T. when Moses asked to see the glory of God. Moses had experienced many encounters with God - God had spoken to him through the burning bush; God had revealed plague after plague that He planned to execute upon the Egyptians to him; God had given to Moses the law and the blueprint for the tabernacle on top of Mt. Sinai. It must have been very frustrating to Moses to keep having this communication with someone that He had never seen. And finally, Moses' curiosity got the best of him and he asked to just get one glimpse of God - *Let me just see you once*, Moses asked. The conversation is recorded in Exodus 33 - let me read it for you.

Exodus 33:18-23

¹⁸ *Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."*

¹⁹ *And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."* ²⁰ *But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."*

²¹ *Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock."* ²² *When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by.* ²³ *Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."*

What an intriguing scene this is. Moses having grown in his knowledge and fellowship with God reaching that place in his life where He just wanted a little bit more - to see God personally. But then God coming back and telling Moses that this just wasn't possible. With Moses' earthly limitations, he just couldn't bear to see the fullness of God's glory and still live. But then God in his mercy and compassion placing his servant in a small cave in the rock, and then putting a shield over Moses and passing by him, so that Moses could just catch a fleeting glimpse of the afterglow of God's glory - like the vapor trail that follows the jet. What an experience this must have been for Moses.

But there is waiting a far greater experience for each of God's children. For one day, we will be released from the earthly limitations of these bodies. One day, with a sinless, perfect, resurrected body we will be welcomed by God into His heaven. On that day, like the Apostle John in his vision, we will be able to experience the glory of God. And with the angelic choir we will be able to sing praises to God's infinite glory. I am convinced that there is nothing on this earth that can even begin to compare with that experience of God's glory. And that experience awaits each of God's children.

Do you want to experience the glory of God? There is only one way to have the assurance that you will enjoy that experience one day - and that is to be giving glory to God right here, right now upon this earth. And we give glory to God as we believe correctly about Him.

Do you believe in the God of the Bible? Now I am not asking if you believe in God - for almost everyone in our country would answer *yes* to that question.

But do you believe in the true and living God of the Bible? Do you believe in the God who sent His one and only Son to die for your sins? Have you accepted Jesus Christ into your life trusting in Him alone for the forgiveness of your sins? Do you have the confidence this morning that you have been born again into the family of God? Do you have the assurance that one day you will join the Apostle John and the angelic choir and all of God's children who have gone on before experiencing the glory of God in heaven?

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory . . .