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Obtaining to Glory

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1. INTRODUCTION

‘The Scriptures . . . promise success to man, as well as command him to accomplish his creational goal. If we link this with the purpose of God for his creation and the anticipated fulfilling of that gracious goal, we can also see that this hope brings meaning and destiny to man’ (D. Meatheringham, *Spotlight on Success*, p.3).

The secular community expends energy on its hopes, its projected destinies – the Utopian expectation of the Marxists, the ‘perpetual peace’ of the Pacifists, and the reign of a master race. The Church has produced its theologies of liberation, hope and millennial reigns. Others have sought relief from this ‘wretched world’ into some timeless Beyond. The Jews looked to release from this age, to a glorious future age. We Christians believe that God’s revelation has really come, in this present world, and look to a glorious future – centred on the risen Jesus of Nazareth. In Christ, man is called, to obtain glory.

2. GLORY

Glory –*kabod* in the OT, and *doxa* in the NT –connotes a weightiness, dignity, gravity which is impressive. This may include beauty, and inspires respect. This glory suggests something which radiates from its bearer, leaving an impression on the beholder. Jacob cites God’s glory as ‘the incandescent ectoplasm of his invisible spirit’ (*Theology of O. T.*, p. 80). This glory is discerned simultaneously with holiness.

3. MAN – ‘THE GLORY OF GOD’ (I Cor. 11:7)

Psalm 8 is a commentary on Genesis 1 and 2, where man created, was invested as vicegerent, with glory and honour. The nature and mandate for humanity is enumerated in terms of dominion over all

things', in a manner 'little lower than God'.

Man's creational glory is functional (proper authority), moral (truth, holiness and righteousness), and physio-formal (he is a *bodily* reflection of God).

4. 'FALLING SHORT OF GLORY'

Genesis 3 and Romans 1 describe man's rebellion his refusal, thence failure, to know glory. Romans 3: 23 suggests that man/Adam forfeited the glory he already enjoyed, so failing to attain the glory intended for him by God.

Consequently man experiences shame¹, turns to idolatry, and dishonours himself (Romans 1: 21ff.)² 'The shame lies essentially in the fact that the man has fallen from the honour given him by God in creation and has misused his body. Honour is also lost not only by perversions but by false asceticism. So Colossians 2:23' (*Dictionary of N. T. Theology*, p.51).

Man now feels the trauma of God's glory (and holiness), a form of 'cosmic claustrophobia' threatening to crowd him out. The non-believer seeks then to 'make light of this', by substituting autodoxology to fulfil his created nature and destiny.

5. GOD'S PURPOSE STANDS

God's oath is pronounced in Numbers 14: 21, that His glory will fill the earth: all the nations will experience God dwelling with them, and follow Him.

(a) *Moses*. The great proto-typical prophet was privileged to receive God's revelation. His

request to see God's face, was answered by God's name: so Exodus 33 and 34. God indeed 'faced' [confronted – Heb. is verbal] Moses. God saw Moses' face; Moses was faced by God. The people of Israel could not bear to see Moses' unveiled face.

- (b) *Tabernacle: Temple*. The glory cloud guided the people of God, and symbolised the presence of God with His people. This was true for both Tabernacle, and Temple. God Himself, in His sovereign freedom, was not tied to the Temple (cannot be contained). Exodus 29: 45,46. This was, however, the cultic meeting place for man to approach God. So Exodus 23: 15, 17. When the glory departed, the Covenant Ark was captured, and Israel dishonoured.
- (c) *Isaiah*. The prophet was confronted in the Temple. Isaiah 6:1ff. The angelic testimony is that 'the earth *constitutes* the glory' of God, v. 3. The earth appears to be 'bathing in the splendour of His light' (Vriezen, *OT Theology*, p.208). Creation is the confronting arena of God's glory: God is vigilant to see that His Will prevails (Rom. 1: 19ff., Exodus 15:11ff., Leviticus 10:1ff., 19:2ff., Psalm 19 and 24).
- (d) *Jeremiah*. This prophet calls man to glory in the LORD (chs.23–24, cf. I Corinthians 1:31, II Corinthians 10:17). Man has, however, turned from God to the false. His people had to learn that their deepest dishonour lay in their faithlessness (Jeremiah 6:15, Exodus 16:63, Jeremiah 23:40). The Lord's servant bore this shame and dishonour (Isaiah 53: 3), whilst some are raised to shame (Daniel 12: 2).
- (e) *Ezekiel*. The 'likeness of the glory of the LORD' appeared to Ezekiel, chs.1, 2 [3:23, 8:4]. He

¹ For shame as antonym for glory, see Hosea 4:7 and Habakkuk 2: 16.

² Jer, 2:11, with Psa. 106:19,20 - to turn from glory is a turning to idolatry.

knew the association of the glory with the Temple, but was distressed as he saw the glory depart, as destruction was imminent (Ezekiel 9). He predicted the restoration of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple – so the glory (Ezekiel 43:1ff).

- (f) *Eschatological expectation.* God's self revelation of glory, seen in creation, was expected to be fully manifest in the last days, to effect the salvation of Israel, and convert the nations (Hab. 2: 14). God's people would share the joyful experience of the vision of God Himself (Exodus 33:12–23, Isaiah 6:1–5, Ezekiel 1:28, John 14: 21–22).

6. 'THEY SAW HIS GLORY'

The Synoptic Gospels.

The Birth of Jesus, clothed with a sign of humility (Luke 2:12 cf. Ezekiel 16: 14), was announced with great glory (Luke 2:8–20).

The Baptism and Temptation show the investing of the Son by the Father with His Spirit: Jesus followed the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted with Satan's kingdom glory (Matthew 4: 9, 10).

During His ministry, Jesus clearly observed the glory of creation (Matthew 6: 29), He did not repudiate esteem and honour given Him, defended Himself against insults, and warned the disciples not to seek honour from men (Matthew 6: 1–18, Luke 14: 11, 18: 14, Mark 10: 35–37).

The Transfiguration of Jesus marks the turning point in His public ministry, as the inner three disciples are given a glimpse of future glory. Jesus was glorified, as Moses and Elijah appeared with Him to discuss the new Exodus. The Father spoke from the Glory–cloud, authenticating Jesus as the Prophetic Son.

This Son of Man, later crucified as predicted, was raised from the dead. He would return in glory on the last day as judge (Luke 24:26, Matt. 25:31ff).

The Fourth Gospel.

A clear parallel is drawn between the Exodus revelation of the Law to Moses, with God's name, and the new revelation to all men: the Word incarnate. Exodus 34:6,7 – The glory or nature of God is revealed as covenant love and faithfulness = grace and truth (John 1:14. So also in Hosea 4:1ff and Jonah 4:2, 3). God now dwells (tabernacles) permanently with man, in and through Jesus.

John argues that the glory of God is seen 'in the flesh' – Jesus is the embodiment of God's glory. This is clearly perceived by faith. In the works and words of Jesus, the revelation of the Father's glory (=grace and truth) are observed. The works of Jesus are signs (of glory) [John 2: 11], and all point to the grace of the Father, domestically. Jesus argues that the works culminate as glory and grace at the Cross, although this is known only by faith. The glory is revealed, but hidden: there is a hiddenness about the signs in this gospel. Jesus expected the observers to see His Father's glory in all His works.

Jesus' life, a living doxology, shows a marked repudiation of auto-doxology. There is a legitimating significance in the glorification of Jesus (John 13:31, 32). Jesus will not seek glory, to assert His authority and priority (5:41–44, 8:53,54). He is no false prophet, but has exclusive access to God's truth, since heaven is His origin (John 1: 18, 3:31, 35).

The hour of the Cross: Jesus maintains (contra Incarnational Theology) that the Father's 'hour' for His Son is the CROSS. By means of the Cross the new family of God is established (cf. John 2:1ff and 1:11ff with 19:25ff), the Father is glorified (God's grace is revealed by the suffering Son), the disciples

are given the only way to the Father (so too for Jesus the Son, 12:26, 13:36, 14:3 and 6, 17:24), and the new centre of worship in spirit and truth (4: 23) established (2: 19). At the Cross the Son, in His flesh, manifests God's glorious presence. This presence, prefigured by the Old Testament Tabernacle, and realised in Jesus, is brought to us by His Spirit (John 14:16ff, 16: 14).

The new community, of faith, experience the risen and glorious Lord (John 20: 17) who leads them to the Father's mansions, forever (John 14:2,3, 8: 35,36).

[We note the absence of the Transfiguration narrative from the Fourth Gospel, but see John 12:27ff.]

7. THE DAMASCUS DOXOPHANY

Saul, the Pharisee, journeying to Damascus with raging fury, was confronted by the risen Lord. Saul persecuted the Christians for claiming that the Law cursed Jesus as the Messiah, and that the Law and Temple had been overthrown by the risen Jesus. Acts 9 (parallel chs. 22 and 26) records this confrontation. At first Saul asks himself, 'Is this really an appearance of Christ, or a demonic deceit?' (Kunneth *Theol. of Resurrection*, p. 102). His response is that God revealed His Son to him (Galatians 1: 12). The report given is parallel to that of Isaiah chapter 6 – he knows that he has seen no mirage.

- (a) The newly named Paul likens his experience to that of Moses, in *II Corinthians 3. and 4*. The Christian is now the counterpart of Moses, as Christ the Lord, the life giving Spirit, makes a new prophet people for God. God's glory is seen in the face of Christ = the image of God.
- (b) The freedom, and growth in glory Paul has seen in Christ, and experienced by His Spirit, is

further outlined in *Romans 8*. After describing the parallel groaning of creation, the elect, and the Spirit (8:22–28), as God works for good for those called according to His purpose = sonship = glorious liberty = redemption of the body. The order of salvation is enumerated in 8:29,30 from predestination to glorification. The risen Son is the prototype of the new humanity, as the Eldest son. Man will inherit honour and glory (Psalm 8 with Romans 2: 7, 10).

- (c) Paul encourages the *Thessalonians*, who have turned from idolatry to serve and wait (I Thess. 1: 9, 10), to be ready for the glorious coming of Jesus. At His appearing, they will obtain glory (I Thessalonians 4:16–18, II Thessalonians 2: 13–14). Those who oppose God will be excluded from God's presence and glory (II Thessalonians 1: 9, 10).
- (d) The *Philippians* are secure in Christ (1:6,11, Jude 24,25) as they follow His example: as image = form of God He humbled Himself, even to death, and was raised to glory by the Father (2: 5–11). Believers are to be free from glorying in shame (3: 19), but patiently wait for glorification of the body (3: 20, 21) [cf. 'subject all things' as fulfilment of Psalm 8: 5ff].
- (e) Paul takes up certain themes, with great vigour.
 - (i) the futility of idolatry: due to the curse on all creation, nothing can satisfy man as it ought, even if used properly (Rom. 8:19–22 and Romans 1: 23).
 - (ii) the futility of the law: the law could never, of itself, effect salvation for any man (Romans 8:3,4, 1:17, Galatians 2:16–21, 3: 11).
 - (iii) the futility of persecution: having persecuted

the people of God (Acts 9: 5), Paul knows that persecution (suffering) works against God, and effects glory for the united body of Christ (Phil.3:10, Romans 8:17,18).

- (iv) the proclamation of the Gospel: the risen Lord calls, by the Word, for glorification affected by the Spirit. This is hopeful work, based on the resurrection (I Corinthians 15:12ff).
- (v) the image of God = put on = new man. These are interrelated, as Paul sees the risen Lord as the new Man, the Last Adam, the image of God. (So see Ephesians 4: 24, Colossians 3:4,9ff, Ephesians 2: 11, Romans 12:1,2.)
- (vi) the goal of sonship: the purpose of the incarnation and passion is our sonship (Galatians 4:4ff). The Abrahamic divisions, as in Galatians 3:28,29, are dissolved as Christians are sons of God = incorporated in 'seed of Abraham'.
- (vii) the glory of Paul: Paul knows that his converts will win him glory and honour
(II Corinthians 1: 12, 14, 3: 1-3, I Thess. 2: 19, 20).

Paul, radically converted and called on the Damascus road, will know no one other than the risen Lord of glory, and proclaim His gospel (I Corinthians 2: 1-5, Galatians 3: 1, Philippians 3: 7-14). He longs for this glory for himself (Colossians 1: 27, II Corinthians 5: 1-4).

8. JESUS, CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOUR

Hebrews 1:1-5 records the glorious coronation of the Son. He is given the supreme name (cf. Psalm 110)

and obtains the honourable inheritance. In 1: 5-2:4 we find the Son, in principle victorious over all His enemies.

Hebrews 2:5-18 the exalted Jesus is in principle triumphant over death, but waiting to see 'all things' subordinate to him, and so through Him, to all mankind. On the basis of grace, Jesus has tasted (experienced) death for all, so brings many sons to glory. This is the goal of God, and man. The mandate given man at creation (Psalm 8) is now fulfilled, but only in the crucified-risen Jesus. Through Him, the Abrahamic sons = seed, obtain the promised inheritance. Our coronation will also be effected, through Jesus, after we are raised: Jesus has reached where we as His brothers are destined to arrive.

Hebrews 5:7-9 explains that as Son, He learned obedience through suffering: this growth is not psychological development so much as faithful recognition of the truth of God. Jesus learned that God was to be trusted in the face of death: He learned what salvation means for His brothers – salvation through resurrection.

The new people of faith, assisted by the Pioneer of faith, strive to obtain the crown of life, the vision of the Father (Hebrews 12:14, John 14:8).

9. PETER: WITNESS OF HIS MAJESTY

II Peter 1:16-19 contains the Petrine record of the Transfiguration. Peter witnessed the Father's authentication of His Son, and the reception of 'glory and honour' by Jesus (cf. Psalm 8: 5). In the Synoptics we find the distress of Peter, that this glorious one should be crucified (Mark 8:31,32). Later Peter experienced guilt and shame for denying the Lord of Glory; this was followed by forgiveness (John 21: 15-19).

The ageing Peter encourages believers to suffer,

if necessary, as they follow the Christ. He knows personal failure, but brings comfort to others (I Peter 1:3–9, 2:23ff and 4: 12–5:11), where the suffering of the believer is a copy of that of Christ.

Peter anticipates his departure = glorification (John 13:36,37, 21:19, II Peter 1:13–15).

10. THE REVELATION TO JOHN

In chapter 1 the risen Lord Jesus appears to John, as the new archetypal glory image. He directs His people (chapters 2,3) by the Word of His Spirit, and renews the church and guides all history. In chapter 21,22 the Church is presented as the now glorified archetypal image. The original creation (Genesis 1), is now transformed (Revelation 21,22), with man restored to uninhibited communion with God. *'The goal or telos of the whole cosmic process will be the creation of a new heaven and a new earth in which the Word will tabernacle, not with a few disciples chosen out of the world, but with the "nations"'* (Richardson, *Intro. to New Testament Theology*, p. 165).

11. RELATED THEMES

- (a) *Rewards*: are given on the basis of grace, not merit. 'Our works and strivings are accepted by God as wrappings might be accepted for a present' (Bloesch, *The Christian Life and Salvation*, p. 95).
- (b) *Clothing*: from Genesis 3 onwards, God has provided clothing for His people. Aaron's high-priestly garments are 'for glory and beauty' (Exodus 28: 2, 40). Israel was enrobed by God (Ezekiel 16:6–14); the risen Lord is robed (Rev. 1) and the new people of God (Rev. 19: 8, 21: 2).

- (c) *Tabernacle/Temple*: The Jerusalem Temple has served its purpose. In the new age, God's permanent dwelling place is with men by means of a new Tabernacle (Rev. 21: 3, 21: 22,23).
- (d) *Honour to People*: –to parents (Ephesians 6: 1,2).
–to Church members (I Tim. 5:3, Philippians 2: 29), even to those who carry out 'lowest' services (I Corinthians 12: 23ff, Romans 12: 10).
–to all men (I Peter 2: 17), including emperor.
- (e) *Abrahamic inheritance*: to his 'seed'. The object of this is no longer the land, the nation of Israel, the Temple, or the Law – rather sonship in the new heavens and new earth = eternal life.
- (f) *New Jerusalem*. Men of faith looked to a new fatherland (Hebrews 11: 14), with a new city (11: 10). The ancient city of Jerusalem has been displaced (Hebrews 12: 22, Galatians 4: 22–31), but the new, holy, beautiful, heavenly, God made city (Revelation 21: 2,3). This had been predicted in Ezekiel 37: 26,27.

12. CONCLUSION

The risen Lord leads the sons to glory. Each resurrection appearance is explained by a word of counsel. We concur with the Psalmist, who says in 73: 24, 'Thou dost guide me with thy counsel, and afterward thou wilt receive me to glory'.

'When the doxophany comes at last into unlimited display – then the doxology will also come into unlimited activity' (Stauffer, *NT Theol.*, p. 229).