

Ministry of Grace Church

The Glory of God

Preface:

Let's start off with a simple question. What is a Christian? You're not a Christian because you live in a Christian country. In fact, I'm not sure that we could call ourselves a Christian country any more. You're not a Christian because your parents are Christians. Nor, are you a Christian because you belong to a certain church or even because you attend church regularly. According to the Apostle Paul, in his letter to the church in Rome,

... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

We are all sinners and we have earned God's condemnation by our sin. But, because Jesus lived a perfect life, a life without sin, and gave up his life on the cross for us. And – because he rose from the dead, we too can have eternal life by accepting His payment for our sins. Christians have a very special position in God's eternal plan.

Most Christians, however, have a poor image of who and what our God is. Because He is a God of love, many Christians see him as a benevolent dictator who wouldn't hurt a fly and, therefore, won't really send anybody to Hell. But – He is also a God of wrath, who demands righteousness, and that means He must judge sin.

At the end of his treatise on the purpose of life in the book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon said:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep His commandments. For this is the whole duty of man. (Ecclesiastes 12:13) [MKJV]

The word fear, does not mean that we are to cower in fear of our God (unless we are His enemy), it means we are to have a reverential fear. It means that we are to be aware that He is an all-knowing, all-powerful God who stands against all who oppose Him. But it also means that we are aware that He will guard and protect those whom He loves.

The thing that most Christians misunderstand about God are His Power, His Glory, and His Majesty. These are hinted at throughout the Bible. However, they are on dramatic display in the book of Revelation. Yes, I know many people avoid Revelation because it is an enigmatic and sometimes terrifying book. However, I want to look quickly at three different chapters of the book of Revelation so that we can get a better picture of God's power, His glory, and His majesty. These are chapters one, four, and five.

Revelation 1:1-18

¹The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ²who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. ³Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

⁴John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶and made us *kings*, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

⁷Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. ⁸“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

⁹I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet ¹¹saying, “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.” ¹²Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. ¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, ¹⁸and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, (**Hebrews 2:14**) [NASB]

Revelation 1:19-20

¹⁹Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. ²⁰As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Revelation 4:1-4

¹After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” ²At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. ⁴Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

... We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (**2 Corinthians 5:6-10**)

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw -- each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (**1 Corinthians 3:8-15**)

Revelation 4:5-11

⁵From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, ⁶and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" ⁹And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

Revelation 5:1-14

¹Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" ³And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." ⁶And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. ⁸And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰and you have made them *kings* and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." ¹¹Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" ¹³And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" ¹⁴And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

This scene takes place after the rapture, after the Judgment Seat of Christ, and just before the 7-year Tribulation.

So What?

After what we've seen in today's message, I'm confident that none of us can miss the majesty and glory of the one seated on the throne. If we look at how God deals with mankind throughout history, one thing stands out to me. The church is unique throughout history. Let me explain.

According to Dispensational Theology there are 7 Dispensations: Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, Promise, Law, Grace, and Kingdom. In the dispensation of Innocence, God had a personal relationship with Adam and Eve, but that didn't last very long. During the dispensations of Conscience and Human Government, God did not have a personal relationship with His people, with a few exceptions such as Enoch, Noah, and Job. Then He chose Abraham to have a very special relationship with Him. And, with Abraham's grandson Jacob (also called

Israel), God chose a family of people to be His own. He wanted a personal relationship with the Israelites. They are even considered God's wife. Unfortunately, Israel decided to be an unfaithful wife, having demonstrated that they preferred idolatry over a personal relationship. Then with the advent of the Redeemer, God chose to have a relationship with all who would accept His Son the Redeemer. To cement the relationship with His church, God chose to adopt all who accepted His offer of salvation through His Son, the Redeemer. We are the only people in history who are genuine members of God's family. Then, He chose his adopted children (the church) to be married to His Son.

Looking at this another way, we see that there are two periods in history where God chose a personal relationship with His people, the periods of Law and Grace.

Today, from chapters 1, 4, and 5 of the Book of Revelation, we see the unique position of the church. In addition to being the bride of Christ, we will rule with our husband during the Millennial reign of Christ. We will be judged differently than all the rest of mankind at the Bema Seat Judgment. And – we are the only group of God's people who are shown to be ruling with God in heaven. As Peter tells us in his first general epistle:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Finally, as God's adopted children, we are His heirs. We will inherit all things along with our husband, the Son of God, the Son of the glorious, magnificent, regal, majestic, splendid, all-knowing, all-powerful God of all creation.

Does that make you feel special, my friends? If you have confessed Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then you are special. You are very special!

Now What?

Seeing what God has done for you and what He has planned for you, does that change your outlook on your position in Christ? It should!

It should motivate you to live the remainder of your life on this earth in such a way that it brings Him more glory, more honor, and more praise. It should motivate you to live the remainder of your life entirely for Him.

Are you ready to make that commitment? Just think of what He has done for you!

Let's pray.

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