

Jesus' Glory as the Only Face of God

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Date: 22 September 2013

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[0:00] John 12 and verse 37. Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.

! This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet. Lord, who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For this reason they could not believe. Because as Isaiah says elsewhere, He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so that they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn, and I would heal them.

Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him. Yet at the same time, many even among the leaders believed in him.

But because of the Pharisees, they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue. For they love praise from men more than praise from God.

[1:03] Then Jesus cried out, When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me.

I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. As for the person who hears my words, but does not keep them, I do not judge him, for I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.

There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words. That very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.

I know that his command leads to eternal life, so whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say. The Vatican has a strange accounting problem.

How much would you say that the Sistine Chapel is worth? Michelangelo himself, the great Renaissance artist, spent months lying upside down, painting overhead on scaffolding to create one of the most recognizable pieces of art in the world.

[2:35] How much is that worth? How much would you say for his statue of Moses or his statue of Mary holding the body of Jesus?

The question is, is how do you put a price on things that are priceless? Traditionally, I find this very interesting, traditionally on the accounting books for the Vatican, they say all of their worth, all of their art is worth one lira.

That is one dollar, so to speak. Do you see their problem? How do you put a price on something that is priceless? If you have to put a number, one number is just as good as another number and just as accurate as another.

Now, what about Jesus? Jesus. Christian, what price would you put upon him? Well, to us, he is infinitely beautiful, infinitely unique, infinitely valuable.

With Paul, we say everything is rubbish compared to the greatness of knowing Christ. Everything is sewage compared to him.

[4:02] Not something that you count dear, but something that you are glad to get rid of. Now, some of you, I know full well that you have put a price on Jesus.

The smile of a friend is more valuable to you than Jesus. Comfort in this world is more valuable to you than Jesus. That special sin, yourself, you count all those things more valuable than Jesus. But when God opens your eyes and says, let there be light, you say, now I see that Jesus' deed is infinitely beautiful and totally and completely priceless.

I could put no number on him. Well, why is he so glorious? Why is he so precious to us as Christians? Because in his face, we see the glory of God.

And we began a series last week on the glory of Christ. And tonight I want to see that Jesus' glory, I want to see his glory as this only face of God, the image of the invisible God, the perfect representation of his being.

[5:24] And what I'm saying is that Jesus is glorious because in him and only in him do we see the fullness of the grandeur of who God is, the fullness of his majestic glory.

And not only do we see it and comprehend it in our minds, but we are brought near to it in our lives and who we are. And so I have four points tonight.

First, some essential facts. Second, the mystery revealed. Third, wisdom's address. And fourth, love's crescendo.

So first, some essential facts. We're going to start by laying down some basic facts that we need to understand before we move on.

And the first essential fact is found in verse 46 of the passage that I had read for you, John chapter 12. Verse 46, I have come into the world as a light so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

[6:31] So here's our first essential fact that Jesus is a shining light in to this world's darkness. Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, said after John was born, the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness.

So John the Baptist is this precursor, is this prophet to go before him, but the rising sun will come. That's Jesus. And he's here to shine into the darkness.

What is that darkness? Well, it's ignorance. It's ignorance of God. It's despair of knowing God, of not knowing God, not knowing how to be saved, not knowing the way back to God.

Sitting in darkness means you do not know God who is light. To not have a relationship with him is what it means to sit in darkness.

And so into the night of our souls, Christ begins to shine. Christ clothed in the gospel. What I mean is Christ coming, doing the gospel, making the gospel happen.

[7:44] Christ clothed in the gospel brings joy for our despair. It brings light for our ignorance and hope for our hopelessness. So he's the rising sun.

He's the beginning of a new creation. We're blind. And then God says, let light shine out of the darkness. Let there be light.

He makes the light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. It's in the face of Christ that light, the knowledge of God's glory, bursts into our hearts.

And so Jesus is the light of the world. And whoever believes in him will not stay in darkness, but will come into the light, the light of the knowledge of God's glory. And so what it means to be a Christian is to have God's glory flooding into our lives through Jesus Christ and living in that light.

So that's our first fact, that through him, the light of the knowledge of God shines into our lives. He's the light of the world. And here's the second fact. It's in verse 45. When you see Jesus, you see God.

[9:01] Such simple words, such profound soul-gripping truth. Verse 45. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me.

This is the glory of Christ. Look over at chapter 14 in verse 9. Maybe it's just right across the page. 14:9. Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

Colossians 1:15. He is the image of the invisible God. God remains invisible until we see Christ. God has chosen one and only one way to savingly reveal himself to men. And it's through Jesus Christ. So no one can come to the Father except through me.

And so this is the beginning of the glory of Jesus Christ. That only in him can we know God. We can know lots of things about God. But we never come to really know God until we come to Jesus.

[10:10] Now here's the third fact. When you hear Jesus, you hear God. verse 49, chapter 12. For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.

Jesus speaks. And what does he say? Exactly what the Father wants him to say. What to say and how to say it.

And so when you hear Christ, you hear God, the Father. And then look over again at 14:10. So this is a parallel passage.

1410. The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father living in me who is doing his work. He's the word of the Father.

In the beginning was the word and the word was God and the word was with God. Out of our hearts, our mouths speak. So you can tell what is in a man by what he says.

[11:24] Jesus is the word of the Father. He's the revelation of God's hearts. Jesus is what the Father has to say to us.

And so are you listening? Are you listening to the Father? You can't listen to the Father without listening to the Son. To ignore Jesus is to ignore God.

It's to ignore his word. Children, if you ignore your parents when they speak to you, if you ignore your parents' words, you ignore them.

If you ignore Christ, the word of God, then you ignore God. Obedient children, children who love their parents, have their ears open to their parents.

And what that means is even when the children are doing something in a different room, a part of their brain, a part of their ears, are tuned to what their parents are saying.

[12:27] So if the parents call, the children should hear and come. So if you're playing and your parents call, you can't say, well, I didn't hear you.

As a parent, you would say, well, you need to start hearing me. If I spoke loud enough for you to hear, then you need to be listening for me. So what is it to love God, your Father?

What is it to be obedient children to God, our Father? Father. It's to be tuned in to Jesus. It's to be open, responsive to who Jesus is, what he has done, what God is saying through him.

He is what the Father has to say. So let's put those three just essential facts together and apply them and put them to use. So Jesus shines the light of God's glory into the darkness.

When you see Jesus, you see God. When you hear Jesus, you hear God. Let's put those facts into use. Turn to, well, just look over at John chapter 13.

[13:34] John chapter 13. Let's just read the first five verses. It was just before the Passover feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.

Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power. What would you do if you had all things under your power?

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God. So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

And after that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with a towel that was wrapped around him. Who are we seeing?

[14:47] What are we seeing? Who are we seeing as we see Christ take off his outer clothing and wrap a towel around his waist? What are we seeing when we see him wash his disciples' dirty feet?

What are we seeing when John says he showed them the full extent of his love? Well, we're seeing Christ's love, aren't we? We're seeing Christ's humility.

We're seeing Christ's heart for his disciples. And to meditate on that, it brings our heart great joy, doesn't it?

To think that's Jesus' heart for his disciples. It makes our hearts overflow. But then there's so much more. Who are we seeing? What are we seeing?

Well, we're seeing God. We're seeing God's heart, God's humility, God's love, God's gentleness for the ones whom Jesus has bought, Jesus' disciples.

[15:58] When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. When we look at Jesus, we see the one who sent him. The glory of God shines into the darkness of our hearts.

And aren't our hearts dark so often? Even as Christians, dark with not sure who God is, with fears and suspicions, we so often look at God.

And into that darkness, Jesus shines. And he clears out the darkness. And so here's this first practical application. The Gospels are a gateway to knowing God.

They're a gateway to knowing God. In the epistles, there is argument, and there's logic, there's an explanation. The epistles are the captions, so to speak, on the painting.

And they are so necessary. And I'm not belittling them in the least. But in the Gospels, we see God's glory in movement, in life, in color.

[17:05] We see it in Jesus, the God-man. We see God's glory living and breathing. We see it in Christ. And so we need to make the Gospels a steady part of our devotional diet.

But, because through Jesus Christ, the glory of God shines into our lives. And so as you read, learn to look for God the Father in the Gospels, in Christ.

And when, because when you see me, you see the one who sent me. And when you hear me, you hear the one who is speaking through me. You hear the Father. And so look at his compassion. Look at Jesus' compassion upon the sick. So often it says he saw them and his heart was moved with compassion. Look at that and see the Father's heart.

There's no separation. It's not like Jesus' heart is one thing and God the Father's heart is totally different. Look at him saying, Father, forgive them. And you can hear God's heart echo back.

[18:08] I will forgive them. I'm not saying that Jesus and the Father are the same. But Jesus is the image of God. The exact representation of his being.

He is glorious. Jesus is glorious because in him and through him, God is opened up to us. In his face, God shines.

No second. The mystery unveiled. The mystery unveiled. A mystery.

Do you like mysteries? Do you like Sherlock Holmes mysteries or maybe reading mysteries, watching mysteries? Do you like magic tricks? I know I love watching magic tricks because I'm just, obviously I have no idea what they're doing and it's all so amazing.

And so you see a magic trick and you're just dying to know how they did it. It doesn't make any sense. You want to know how it happened. Well, in either case, in a mystery or a magic trick, once you have it figured out, it makes so much sense, doesn't it?

[19:22] And you wonder, I wonder, why didn't I see it before? So when Sherlock Holmes finally explains how all the clues fit together, you say, ah, now I see it. Now it makes sense.

Or when someone gives you the answer, the solution to the magic trick, you see, oh, now I see. It's explained. So what was so confusing makes sense.

What was dark and unclear becomes clear and straight and plain. Something hidden now revealed. That's how the Bible uses the word mystery.

That's how Paul uses the word mystery. So please turn over to Colossians chapter 2. We're going to spend the remainder of our time here in Colossians chapter 2. And in this passage, Paul speaks of a mystery.

Something hidden but now revealed. Colossians chapter 2. and look at verse 2.

[20:28] My purpose is that they, that's the people in Laodicea and in Colossae, may have the full riches of complete understanding in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ.

Christ. So Paul uses that word mystery. Remember, in the New Testament, that doesn't mean something obscure, obscure and unknowable. That's how we use the word.

Instead, it means something, it was once hidden but now revealed. In the Old Testament, it was obscure but now it's revealed. It was hidden in days past but now in the New Testament, it is revealed.

revealed. That's how Paul uses that word mystery. And so what does Paul say was hidden? What is the mystery? Well, he says, the mystery of God.

What is the mystery that was once hidden and now revealed? God. And now, how is he revealed? How is it all cleared up?

[21:39] How do you come to a bright light understanding of who God is? Paul says, Christ. In Christ. Christ is the missing clue to understand God.

Christ is the missing piece of the puzzle that puts the mystery of God into focus. Now, in the Old Testament, they obviously had some knowledge of God but it was incomplete and it was obscure and it was dark and they didn't quite understand how everything was going to go.

They didn't understand salvation and redemption, God's plan. They had shadows and types and they were true and the prophets spoke truly but it wasn't completely.

But when you see Christ and when Christ comes, now we can say, ah, I see. Now I understand. Now that makes sense.

And so do you see the glory of Christ? This is the glory of Christ. In him, the mystery of God becomes clear. In him, the confusion, the striving, the calculation, the guessing, it comes to an end.

[22:51] Now why is Paul bringing this up here? Why is Paul bringing this up here? Well, because false teachers were bombarding the church in Colossae. And they were saying, we can teach you about God.

We can help you figure out God. We can help you go further up and come to a better understanding of who God is and what he wants for you. And just reading back from the text, we can tell a number of things.

We can tell they were Jewish. In verse 16 of Colossians 2, they want to celebrate Jewish holidays. New moon celebrations, Sabbath days, religious festivals.

So they were Jewish. They were ascetics, which means they had strict rules. Do not touch, do not handle, do not taste.

Verse 23 says they treat their bodies harshly. They have self-imposed worship. And you ask, what is self-imposed worship? It's, well, I think God would be better worshiped if I do this and it's some strict regimen of worship.

[24:07] When I was on vacation, I was turning on the TV and I saw the Roman Catholic channel. And I don't know how I, well, I knew it was Roman Catholic because there they were, all these nuns and they were saying the Hail Marys.

And they were praying through a rosary, which is just a group of beads and for each bead you say the same prayer over and over again. And so they were saying Hail Mary, full of grace, over and over and over and over again.

Self-imposed worship. That's what these men were about. So they were ascetics. They thought if we had enough rules, we do things just right, we mistreat our bodies, we are really strict with ourselves.

And then verse 23, and then apparently there are some sort of spiritual steers. And what I mean by that is, you know how John in the book of Revelation, he's taken up into heaven, he has this vision, and angels showed him all sorts of signs and wonders, things that amazed him.

Now the teachers here were claiming the same sort of thing. Paul says they go on at great lengths about what they have seen. Go into great detail about what they have seen.

[25:33] Paul says they worshipped angels. Whether he's being literal or whether he's just being sarcastic, I'm not sure, but definitely they have this fascination with visions and with angels.

And they were saying this is how you can come to know God. You want to go further up and further into God. You want to understand God better? You want to go take the next step into your Christianity?

Follow us. Listen to us. We've gone the extra mile. We've done what it takes. The way we've treated our body, the rules that we've done, it's brought us into this place where now we've seen things that eyes have not seen.

We can tell you about God. We can help you to know God. Just follow us. Listen to us. And Paul's answer is no. Christ is the unveiling of God.

So how can you know the mystery of God? Know Christ. Paul doesn't have any time for anything else except for Jesus Christ. For in Christ, all the fullness of deity lives in bodily form.

[26:48] You don't need to have visions. You don't need to have ecstatic experiences. You need to know Christ because when you know Christ, the fullness of the deity lives in Christ and you can know God.

So beat your body, follow the rules, work yourself into a trance. And do you see what he's saying? Scale the mountains of religious experience.

Strive for the greatest devotion, levels of devotion, and for all your work, you get nothing. Because in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

knowledge. All that other stuff is unnecessary and it's idolatry. Because Christ and him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Paul says it's all fine-sounding arguments, hollow and deceptive philosophies. It sounds good, it looks good, but it's a lie. Just chasing after the wind.

[27:52] In the blinding light of Christ, the whole world's wisdom is silenced. The whole world's great religious pursuit and all their religiosity is silenced.

So where is the disputer? Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar, the scribe? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made the wisdom of man foolish? Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom.

But we preach Christ crucified. Why preach Christ crucified? Because he's the only way men can know God. So here's the second application.

This shows us the necessity of evangelism. So many people are saying this way is good and that way is good. Any way you want is good. Christ is the only way people can know God.

So what do your friends and your neighbors need? Let's look past all the physical things they need and we could say so much.

[29:06] What do our neighbors and our friends need? At the heart, their problem is they are sitting in darkness. darkness. They're blind to the glory of God and they must see the light.

They must hear Christ of Christ. And so do you see where you're leaving them when you're leaving them alone? Without hope and without light, forever groping and never finding.

That's where you leave them. If you don't tell them about Jesus, they need to hear about a saving love. They need to hear about a Savior that goes into the darkness to save sinners.

They need to hear about a Savior who gives righteousness to sinners. They need to hear about sin and righteousness and the judgment to come.

They need someone to be honest with them and make them look themselves in the face. They need to hear about God's heart towards sinners. sinners. It's the only way. Only in Christ is the mystery of God revealed.

[30:12] And so preach. Speak to them of the Christ. And here's the third application. Do you, Christian, want to grow in your relationship with God?

Do you want to go further with Him? Do you want to be closer to Him? Is there distance? What's the answer?

Mistreat your body? Follow a bunch of rules, man-made? Read the signs? Have some sort of extravagant, ecstatic, spiritual experience?

Go to some camp somewhere and have your world blown apart by a great speaker? Paul's answer in Colossians 2, 6. So then, just as you receive Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

How do you take your Christianity to the next level? You live in Christ, rooted and built up in Him. You believe Christ.

[31:24] You take in Christ for more of what He is. You bring in more of His Lordship, more of His glory, more of His grace. You begin to believe more of Him for your weakness.

See, Jesus isn't just the beginning of Christianity. He's the middle and He's the end. He's the way in and He's the way up. He's the way to God. In Him, God is revealed.

The mystery is uncovered. So that brings us to our third point. Wisdom's address. Wisdom's address. When you study Christ, the Bible says you see God's wisdom.

You see God's wisdom. You come to appreciate and see how vast and beautiful God's wisdom is. Job in Job 28 asks a very interesting question.

Where can wisdom be found? Where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? What's wisdom's address? Where can I go and find it?

[32:30] Where do I need to go? Well, Colossians chapter 2, we're back here, verses 2 and 3. Why? Why is Christ uncovering God?

Why is He, this mystery of God, namely Christ, verse 3, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? See, man searches high and low for understanding.

Man searches for high and low to understand the problem. How do I fix myself? How do I fix other people? How do I fix society? How do I fix what is so broken?

And we are so good at coming up with the wrong answers. So we see racism. And what does everyone say?

What is the problem? What's behind racism? Well, we say it's ignorance. So we educate people and we make them educated racists. And we see poverty and we say they need education and obviously they do, but the cycles of poverty still go on because poverty has a bigger problem than just lack of education.

[33:45] we see crime and we say these criminals obviously have a low self-esteem. We see depression and all sorts of psychological problems and we medicate and we talk it out.

But to what end? Does it fix anyone? Does it really solve the problem? We're so good at finding all the wrong answers and so where can wisdom be found?

In Christ are hidden. all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Paul says he's the wisdom of God. He's the personification of the wisdom of God.

What is God's answer to man's problems? What is God's answer to your problems and your neighborhood's problems and your family's problems? What's the key to solving these?

Well, it's Christ. How does God solve the desperate problems of sinful men? Man's answer is to throw money at problems or to have power. We need to make rules and we need to enforce those rules.

[34 : 53] We need to make better laws and enforce those laws. And God's answer is the cross. God's answer is not money or power. It's death and resurrection of the God man.

So Christ is God's wisdom. And so do you see the depths of God's wisdom in Christ? In his incarnation, in his death, in his resurrection, in his ascension, in his being both God and man, it shows off the depths and the heights and the immensity of God's wisdom.

See, this is the glory of Christ. When you see Christ through him as a lens, you see God is so wise. Here is the answer that we've been looking for. Here is the answer to my problem.

this is God's wisdom for me. So where is, what is wisdom's address? Where can wisdom be found? It's in Christ.

And when we believe that, when we believe that, for one thing, it shows our wisdom. Because when we agree with God, that's a wise thing to do.

[36 : 09] But also through it, we begin to see the glory of God. We just begin to see, oh, God really does know what he's doing. God really does have the solution to my problems.

And when we begin to trust him, we begin to bear that out in our lives. So in Christ, we see the greatness of God's wisdom, and we see the depths of man's folly.

And lastly, Christ is love's crescendo. God's love's love. In Christ, we see the immensity and the passion and the steadfastness and the power of God's love.

So who is able to hold? Who is able to hold the glory of God's love? Who is able to clearly display God's love to people?

God's love is as high as the heavens are above the earth. His love is as great as he is. And he, God, is love.

[37 : 18] So who can clearly shout out the greatness of God's love? What person can show this is how much God loves?

Well, it's only Christ. God's love is echoed out and shouted out to the ends of the earth. God demonstrates his own love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. It was the cross that showed God's immense love. So Christ comes and his whole being as the son of God become man.

the humility that it took to take upon himself the form of a servant and to become obedient, even obedient to death. That means I'm going to go all the way.

Jesus said the world must know how much I love the father, that I'm going to obey him all the way to the end. His whole life, his whole being, his whole ministry is the bright light of God's love.

[38 : 24] to sinful men. Why is there a savior? Because God loves. Why is there this perfect savior that can both sympathize with me and actually help me? Because God is loving.

Why is Jesus there taking the place of sinners? Because God loves. So he suffers pain and humiliation and mockery and he bleeds and he dies for sinners and it's God's love on display.

No one else and nothing else in all of creation is able to fully embrace and show sinful man how much God loves sinners. And now the gospel goes forth.

What does the gospel say? God does not say there is a savior if you wish to be saved.

But, sir, you have no right to go to hell. You cannot go to hell unless you trample on the blood of the Son of God. You cannot go there without trampling on the Son of God.

[39 : 37] See, God's love reaches its crescendo in Christ's death and now you have to trample on the Son of God in order to go to hell. God's love stands in the way and it cries out, stop.

You don't have to go that way. It cries out, stop. And the only way you can go to hell is if you suicidally say, I don't need him. I don't want him.

I'm going to do this my own way. If you plug your ears to the gospel sound. And so, dear unbeliever, God has bared his heart to you.

He's written you the sweetest love letter in the blood of his son. Repent. Stop that suicidal pursuit of sin.

And believe. Believe in God's love for sinners. It's true. It's true. And you can see it in Christ.
[40:44] God loves sinners and so humble yourself. Confess your sins. And the promise is those who humble themselves and confess their sins will be forgiven.

forgiven. So humble yourself and confess your sins and be forgiven. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I pray that you would please open up our hearts so that we can see more and more of the glory of Jesus Christ.

Thank you in him we have such a clear view of your heart. Help us to believe and not lean on our own understanding.

Please be with us as your children. That we might put aside the lesser things and that we might press into Jesus.

That we might hold him as precious and priceless. As the one that we love and cherish more than anything else or more than any other. Pray for the lost here.

[42:02] That you would open their eyes and open their heart. In your grace, stop them in their sin. Oh, indeed, it would be so just and so right.

And no one could complain if you let them go on their way. But for the praise of the glory of your grace, I ask that you would have mercy on them.

That you would not treat them as their sins deserve and that you would not give them what they have earned, but instead for Jesus' sake, save them. Thank you that you are a God of mercy, God of compassion, and so we entrust ourselves to you.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.