

Greater Glory

Psalms 19:1–4 NLT

The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. They speak without a sound or word; their voice is never heard. Yet their message has gone throughout the earth, and their words to all the world.

Psalms 8:1–9 NLT

O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth! Your glory is higher than the heavens. You have taught children and infants to tell of your strength, silencing your enemies and all who oppose you. When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers— the moon and the stars you set in place— what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority— the flocks and the herds and all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and everything that swims the ocean currents. O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!

Genesis 1:2–3 ESV

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.

1. The glory of God brings order out of chaos.

Exodus 33:8–11 NLT

Whenever Moses went out to the Tent of Meeting, all the people would get up and stand in the entrances of their own tents. They would all watch Moses until he disappeared inside. As he went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and hover at its entrance while the LORD spoke with Moses. When the people saw the cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, they would stand and bow down in front of their own tents. Inside the Tent of Meeting, the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.

Exodus 33:18 ESV

Please show me your glory.

Exodus 33:19–23 NLT

The LORD replied, “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, Yahweh, before you. For I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose. But you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live.” The LORD continued, “Look, stand near me on this rock. As my glorious presence passes by, I will hide you in the crevice of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and let you see me from behind. But my face will not be seen.

Exodus 40:16–17 NLT

Moses proceeded to do everything just as the LORD had commanded him. So the Tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month of the second year.

Exodus 40:34–35 NLT

Then the cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle. Moses could no longer enter the Tabernacle because the cloud had settled down over it, and the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle.

2. Glory follows order.

John 1:14–17 NLT

So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.' " From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

3. Jesus both fulfilled the order required and revealed the glory of God, opening the way for God's presence to dwell with us and in us.

John 7:37–39 NLT

On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.' " (When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.)

2 Corinthians 3:4–19 NLT

We are confident of all this because of our great trust in God through Christ. It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God. He has enabled us to be ministers of his new covenant. This is a covenant not of written laws, but of the Spirit.

The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life. The old way, with laws etched in stone, led to death, though it began with such glory that the people of Israel could not bear to look at Moses' face. For his face shone with the glory of God, even though the brightness was already fading away. Shouldn't we expect far greater glory under the new way, now that the Holy Spirit is giving life? If the old way, which brings condemnation, was glorious, how much more glorious is the

new way, which makes us right with God! In fact, that first glory was not glorious at all compared with the overwhelming glory of the new way. So if the old way, which has been replaced, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new, which remains forever!

Since this new way gives us such confidence, we can be very bold. We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was destined to fade away. But the people's minds were hardened, and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ. Yes, even today when they read Moses' writings, their hearts are covered with that veil, and they do not understand. But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

4. The glory of God transforms us.

Small Group Guide: Greater Glory

Opening Question

When has the presence of someone — a mentor, a parent, a close friend — genuinely changed the way you carried yourself? What was it about being with them that left a mark?

God's Glory Is Not Just Something to Admire

The Hebrew word for glory is *kavod* — rooted in a word that means heavy or weighty. In the ancient world, a heavy person was a person of substance and significance. So when Scripture says the heavens declare the glory of God, it is not describing a light or incidental thing. It is saying that the whole of creation is straining to communicate the weight, the magnitude, and the realness of God. And when Psalm 8 says that humans have been crowned with glory and honor, it is making an equally significant claim: made in the image of God, we carry an inherent dignity that does not need to be earned and cannot be taken away.

The Hebrew word for honor — *hadar* — means radiant beauty, majesty, reflected splendor. We were not only made in God's image; we were made to reflect it back — to image God's character to one another and to the world. This is not a passive thing. It is a calling. And it was the original condition of humanity before sin entered: unmediated access to God's presence, every moment of every day, His glory bringing order and flourishing to everything it touched.

After the Fall, that access was severed. What followed was a long progression of partial encounters — burning bushes, pillars of cloud and fire, the Shekinah glory filling the Holy of Holies behind a veil that only the High Priest could approach once a year, with blood. Moses himself, who spoke with God face to face as a friend, could not see God's full glory without being shielded in the cleft of a rock. And when he came down from Sinai after forty days in God's presence, his face shone — but the glory

was already fading. Paul notes this detail in 2 Corinthians: Moses wore the veil not only to protect the people from the brightness, but to conceal that it was diminishing. The glory under the old covenant was real, but it could not stay.

The tabernacle was God's merciful solution in the meantime — a structured, ordered way for His presence to dwell among a people whose sin made unmediated encounter lethal. The pattern required obedience: glory follows order. When Moses built the tabernacle exactly as God commanded, the cloud descended and filled it so completely that Moses himself could not enter. God wanted to be with His people. The system existed to make that possible under the constraints of a fallen world, while pointing forward to something that would remove those constraints entirely.

That something was Jesus. John's Gospel describes the incarnation using the same language as the tabernacle: the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. What was temporary became eternal. What was concealed was revealed. What could only be approached through layers of ritual and blood was now standing in the street, touching lepers, eating with sinners, speaking to the Samaritan woman at a well. Jesus fulfilled every requirement of the pattern, bore the sin that made the veil necessary, and tore it. The result, described in 2 Corinthians 3, is almost breathtaking in its contrast: where Moses experienced a glory that faded and had to be veiled, we now behold the glory of the Lord as in a mirror — and are being transformed by it, from one degree of glory to another. The glory is no longer fading. It is forming us.

For Discussion

1. Kavod — the Hebrew word for glory — means weighty, significant, of substance. How does that definition shift the way you think about what it means to seek God's glory, or to live for it?
2. The progression from the tabernacle to Jesus to us is described as: glory concealed, glory revealed, glory dwelling in us. Where in that progression does your daily experience of God most often feel like it

lands? Do you live as though His glory is still behind a veil, or as though it genuinely dwells in you?

3.2 Corinthians 3 says that as we behold the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. What does “beholding” actually look like in your life on a practical level? What gets in the way of it?

Prayer

Father, You are kavod — weighty, significant, the most real thing that exists. Thank You that You have never been content to stay at a distance. From the hovering Spirit over the waters, to the cloud over the tabernacle, to the Word made flesh among us, You have always been moving toward Your people. Thank You that the veil is gone. Thank You that what Moses could only glimpse from a cleft in the rock, we can now behold openly and be changed by. Jesus, You are the fullness of God’s glory made visible and accessible. Holy Spirit, do what only You can do: make us more and more like Him, from one degree of glory to another. We don’t want to follow from a distance. We want the intimacy that transforms us so that when people encounter us, they see you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.