

THE FRIDAY NIGHT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

THE GLORY OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

- A.** I have chosen what is perhaps my favourite theme for this session.
1. It is truly the heart of God, the true God: the God of the Bible.
 2. Our love for his glory is an indication whether our own hearts have been touched by the true God.
- B.** Most theology today is really anthropology.
1. Theology (def.): the study of God.
 2. Anthropology (def.): the study of man.
 - a. Most theology today is done out of the assumption that:
 - (1) Man is the centre of the universe.
 - (2) God owes man an explanation of things.
 - b. Theology today is largely existential.
 - (1) Existentialism (def.): emphasis on our 'existence'.
 - (2) In a word: the here and now ('What's in it for me?' versus the God who is *there* and the one before whom I will stand *then*).
- C.** For newcomers - some suggestions.
1. Stay with the course throughout this session, no matter how much you disagree.
 2. Do not let what grips you determine how many sessions you attend; go for all of them.
 3. Theology is not always interesting at the moment; the dividends come later. John 14:26: 'the Holy Spirit.....will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you'.
 - a. People ask: Why theology? Isn't it dull and boring?
 - b. I answer: many of the best things that happen to us come as a result of what we underestimated at the moment of endurance!

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(1) 'Theology put simply' is our motto.

(2) We promise to live up to this!

- D.** Why this subject? What is its relevance? Why study the glory of God?
- 1.** It is an introduction to the true and only God: the God of the Bible. He is called the 'God of glory'. Acts 7:2.
 - 2.** It teaches us what matters most - God's own glory. Isa. 42:8.
 - 3.** It is what we fall short of; why we know we are sinners. Rom. 3:23.
 - 4.** We are on holy ground; we are entering the most sacred area I know of. Exod. 3:1-6.
 - 5.** It will be life-changing if we grasp and affirm (from our hearts - not in our heads) the glory of God.
 - a.** It will transform our sense of worship. Isa. 6:1-4.
 - b.** It will humble us. Isa. 6:5a.
 - c.** It will lead to obedience. Isa. 6:6-8.
 - 6.** It is the aim of our lives, whatever we do. I Cor. 10:31.
 - 7.** We will meet at the point where all of the spiritual 'greats' (both in the Bible and church history) have encountered.
 - a.** Sooner or later, in our quest to know God, we will come up against this theme.
 - (1)** Some hate it - and are never the same again.
 - (2)** Some love it - and are never the same again.
 - b.** If we come to love the glory of God:
 - (1)** It will be because we have got to know the true God - and still love him!
 - (2)** We will be in awe that we are treading where the greatest of men and women have trod.
- E.** The glory of God (def.): the dignity of his person.
- 1.** This succinct definition obviously needs to be unpacked; the whole of this study will seek to do just that.
 - a.** Dignity (def.): worthiness, honour or respect.

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- b. Person (def.): God's essential being; that he is a personal God.
 - c. The Trinity is God in three persons.
2. There are two words in the ancient languages that must be observed: each is translated 'glory'.
- a. Old Testament: *kabodh* (Heb.), which refers to heaviness or weight. It refers to one's weight, or stature.
 - (1) We sometimes refer to someone 'throwing his weight around'.
 - (2) This is the basic idea of God's glory in the Hebrew; God's 'weightiness'. It is used no fewer than 222 times in the Old Testament.
 - b. New Testament: *doxa* (Gr.), from which we get 'doxology'; it mainly means 'praise' or 'honour'.
 - (1) It comes from a root word that means 'opinion'.
 - (2) The New Testament thus brings out a meaning inherent in the Old Testament, that connects to God's opinion, or will. It is used no fewer than 168 times in the New Testament.
3. The two words combined lead us to a number of subsidiary definitions, all of which are correct.
4. John used this word to describe Jesus. 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling amongst us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.' John 1:14. And yet its use in John 1:14 mirrors the Hebrew meaning.
- a. The ancient Hebrews referred to the Shekinah glory.
 - b. The Greek word translated 'lived for a while' means 'tented' or 'tabernacled', from a word that is almost certainly taken from the idea of Shekinah.
5. Paul used this word to describe the gospel. 'The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.' II Cor. 4:4.
6. The result of the gospel, then, was 'to give us the light of the knowledge of the *glory of God* in the face of Christ.' II Cor. 4:6.

I THE SUM TOTAL OF GOD'S ATTRIBUTES

- A. Attributes (def.): characteristics of a person.
 - 1. God is a personal God, a 'he' not 'it'. Exod. 3:13.

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2. God is holy. Lev. 11:44. He hates sin.
3. God is merciful. Exod. 34:7. He does not want to punish.
4. God is just. Psa. 89:14. He is absolutely fair.
5. God is jealous. Exod. 20:5. He tolerates no rivals.
6. God is faithful. Lam. 3:23. He will never desert us.
7. God is truthful. Heb. 6:18. He cannot lie.
8. God is eternal. Gen. 21:33. He has no beginning or end.
9. God is unchangeable. Mal. 3:6. His character stays the same.
10. God is omniscient. Psa. 139:1-4. He knows everything.
11. God is omnipotent. Exod. 15:6. He is all-powerful.
12. God is omnipresent. Psa. 139:7-10. He is everywhere.
13. God is invisible. Exod. 33:20. No-one can see him.
14. God is incomprehensible. Rom. 11:33. No-one can fully understand him or figure him out!
15. God is Creator. Eccl. 12:1. He made all that is out of nothing.
16. God is Redeemer. Psa. 19:14. He bought us back with the blood of his Son.
17. God is Spirit. John 4:24. He cannot be seen or touched.
18. God is Saviour. Isa. 45:15. He saves us from our sins and from his wrath.
19. God is King of kings. I Tim. 6:15. All the kings of the earth must bow to him.
20. God is Father. Matt. 11:25. This is what he becomes to us through Jesus Christ.

B. Glory: the one word which sums up all the above.

1. It is the nearest you come to describing God in but one word.

a. Stephen called him 'the God of glory'. Acts 7:2.

b. Later Stephen saw 'the glory of God'. Acts 7:55.

2. It is God's 'essence'.

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- a. Essence (def.): all that makes a thing what it is; its nature.
 - b. The nature, or essence of God, in one word, then: glory.
3. God is the 'weightiest' being that is.
- a. We may ask: 'Who carries the most weight?'
 - (1) It may be royalty.
 - (2) It may be a politician.
 - (3) It may be a wealthy person.
 - (4) It may be someone highly respected, or feared.
 - (5) It *will* be the one with the most power.
 - b. God is the most powerful, awesome being that is - which is his *glory*.

II WHERE CREDIT IS DUE 'Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name.' I Chronicles 16:29.

A. Glory means credit. Who gets the credit? Who gets the glory?

- 1. For creation. Psa. 19:1.
 - a. Who gets the credit for our being created? God.
 - (1) 'I will praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.' Psa. 139:14.
 - (2) How contemptible to speak of creation by chance, or evolution.
 - b. Who gets the credit for the beauty of creation? God.
- 2. For redemption. Eph. 1:14.
 - a. Who gets the credit for our being predestined? God.
 - (1) 'And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.' Rom. 8:30.
 - (2) How silly to speak of salvation in terms of what we have done for God!
 - b. Who gets the credit for purchasing our salvation? God.
 - (1) 'In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.' Eph. 1:7.

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- (2) How absurd for one to speak of salvation in terms of our good works!
- c. Who gets the credit for drawing us? God.
- (1) 'No-one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.' John 6:44.
- (2) How ridiculous that we should say we made the first move toward God!
- d. Who gets the credit for our being kept? God.
- (1) 'For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, not any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Rom. 8:38-39.
- (2) How ludicrous to suppose we keep ourselves saved!
3. For all the benefits that are ours in Christ. Psa. 103:2.
- a. Our gifts.
- (1) 'For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?' I Cor. 4:7.
- (2) How arrogant for us to take credit for what we have!
- b. Our position.
- (1) 'No-one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt a man. But it is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another.' Psa. 75:6-7.
- (2) How thoughtless of us if we say we got to where we are by our own cleverness!
- c. Our guidance.
- (1) 'Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' Psa. 23:6.
- (2) How ungrateful we are should fancy that we cope in our strength.
- B. All that we are and have and hope to be can be summed up in this: to God be the glory!
- III **THE DIGNITY OF HIS PLEASURE** Exod. 33:19.
- A. The dignity of God's pleasure comes to two things:

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1. The dignity of his presence: what his presence does and means.
 2. The dignity of his will: how his opinion should be regarded.
 - a. Moses made a stupendous, if not impertinent, request: to see God's glory! Exod. 33:18.
 - (1) And yet Jesus would later say, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' John 11:40.
 - (2) Stephen saw the glory of God. Acts 7:55.
 - b. God replied to Moses: '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.' Exod. 33:19.
 - (1) This referred to God's presence. Cf. Exod. 33:14.
 - (2) This referred to God's will, what he would be pleased to do.
- B.** For this reason we should pray that God will be *pleased* to show himself.
1. His presence is to be valued above anything.
 - a. The first time God's presence is referred to is in Genesis 3:8.
 - b. God's presence was promised to Moses. 'The Lord replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'" Exod. 33:14.
 2. God's presence graced Solomon's temple. I Kings 8:10-11.
 - a. The presence of God was in fact visible - a cloud.
 - b. We are immediately told: this was the glory.
 - (1) This came to be known as the Shekinah.
 - (2) There is no way of knowing exactly what this was like, although some contemporary testimonies give some hints.
- C.** There are various manifestations of God's presence.
1. There may be a healing presence. Luke 5:17.
 2. There may be a judgement presence. Acts 5:1-11.
 3. There may be a praise presence. Acts 2:46-47.

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4. There may be an intercessory prayer presence. Acts 4:24ff.
 5. There may be presence of wisdom. Acts 6:5,10.
 6. There is a special Presence at the Lord's supper. I Cor. 11:29.
 7. There is a presence that issues in conversions. Acts 2:41.
- D.** Any sense of God's presence is owing to his will.
1. God may be pleased to show or withhold his glory. Romans 9:15.
 2. David Brainerd learned four things about God which led to his conversion:
 - a. God demanded perfect righteousness. (Brainerd didn't have it; it meant he needed a substitute.)
 - b. God demanded perfect faith. (Brainerd couldn't produce it; it meant that God had to give it to him.)
 - c. God could give faith, or withhold it.
 - d. God could save him or damn him. (Either would be just.)
- E.** It is to be coveted above all else - if the church is to have any respect.
1. It is properly called the church's 'genius'.
 - a. It is what will make a church - or break it, should it be absent.
 - b. The worst thing that can be said of the church: 'The glory has departed.'
 - (1) The Ark was a symbol of God's glory.
 - (2) When it was taken it was said that the glory departed. I Sam. 4:21-22.
 2. The church's genius is not:
 - a. Its wealth.
 - b. Its gifted clergymen or ministers.
 - c. Its numbers.
 - d. Its buildings or architecture.
 - e. Its music.
 3. The church's genius is the presence of the glory of God.

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CONCLUSION

- A.** Jonathan Edwards: 'The one thing which Satan cannot successfully counterfeit is a love for the glory of God.'
1. It is the grace that distinguishes us as true believers.
 2. No unconverted man can love God's glory; if you do love it, you are without doubt a true child of God.
- B.** Sometimes the presence of God in the soul is so overwhelming that one simply wants to exclaim 'Glory!' Psalm 29:9.
1. Stephen proclaimed the God of glory.
 2. He ended up seeing God's glory!