

How You Can Glorify God!

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When King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon marched into Judah in 597 BC and subdued the nation, part of his booty included King Jehoiachin and the prophet Ezekiel, who were quickly hauled off to Babylon. For nearly ten years the prophet watched from afar his once proud nation sink into decay and destruction. Why did Judah, and Israel a century and a half earlier, fall?

A major purpose of Ezekiel's book is to remind Israel and Judah—and their descendants—of the causes of both their destruction and their coming national restoration. Central to that theme is the departure of the glory of God from the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 9-11) and the prediction of its ultimate return (Ezekiel 43).

God's glory departed from the Temple because of a famine. Strange? Not really. This famine was the lack of the fruit of righteousness, and it resulted in Sabbath-breaking, idolatry and violence (Ezekiel 20:1-32). Such a famine is prophesied for our own peoples (Amos 8:11).

How can a man glorify the great and awesome Creator God? We can really do nothing that impresses Him—nothing that He could not do Himself. What gets God's attention is obedience, living in the manner revealed through His Word (Ezekiel 33:10-20).

Israel failed to live righteously according to God's commands. As the years passed, the people of Israel steadily grew more corrupt and farther from God; they were not glorifying Him in their actions as an example to the Gentile nations around them. Since Israel's witness was unrighteous, God was not being glorified! Thus, He removed His glory from the Temple as a sign of His displeasure.

Bearing Fruit

God expects us, as His people, the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), to reflect His glory in our attitudes and actions as an example of righteousness to others. The apostle Paul writes, "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:20). "Glorify" in this context means to honor, magnify and praise, and we do these things in our body and spirit, synonymous with action and attitude.

Christ reveals an important aspect of glorifying God through the apostle John: "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples" (John 15:8). And we know that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). If our attitudes and actions reflect this spiritual fruit, we will be glorifying God in our lives.

The fruit of the Spirit and righteousness grow in peace and produce more peace. Their lack produces violence, as the history of ancient Israel attests and our own decaying society proves today.

The home, a place where virtue and truth are to be taught and nurtured, should be peaceful, not full of contention. If peace is absent, the fruit of righteousness cannot grow, just as any crop needs a certain kind of climate in which to grow. After describing godly wisdom, a fruit of righteousness, James writes, "Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (James 3:18).

The glory of God is the revelation of the character and the presence of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ, one of whose titles is "the brightness of [the Father's] glory" (Hebrews 1:3). By producing the fruit of righteousness, Christ manifested God's glory (John 1:14). Through our own righteous conduct, we can reflect Christ's glory, similar to the way the moon reflects the sun's brightness (Philippians 1:11). In producing the fruit of righteousness in an atmosphere of peace, we let God's glory shine through us and make an acceptable witness of God before others (Matthew 5:14-16).

Violent and corrupt Israel did not represent and glorify God to the Gentile nations with the fruit of righteousness, so God removed His glory from the Temple in Jerusalem. But, when Israel turns back to God and produces the fruit of righteousness in peace, God's glory will again brilliantly shine (Ezekiel 43:1-11).

The apostle Paul sums it up by writing to God's church in Corinth—and to us today—"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (I Corinthians 10:31).