

In The Likeness Of Men!

Phillipians 2:5-11

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In Isaiah 14, there are two verses that tell of the thoughts that entered Helel's mind the moment he first rebelled against God. Verses 13-15 speak of Helel saying:

Isaiah 14:13-14 For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'

Every verb and every image in this passage points to Satan's desire to rise to the apex of God's universe. Satan boasted that he would go up, but the words that follow speak of his actual destiny.

Isaiah 14:15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.

Phillipians 2:5-11 contain the New Testament counterpart to Satan's words in Isaiah. These verses picture the descent of Jesus Christ from the second highest position in the universe down to His death on the cross.

Notice the stark contrast here, "I will go up, up, up" said Satan. "You will be cast down to tartaroo, the deepest abyss and utter darkness," God said. "I will go down to the cross," said Jesus. "You will be given the name above every name," said God the Father. What a dichotomy we see here in every way. Could the attitudes be anymore different?

Philippians 2:5-11 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This passage is among the most glorious sections of the New Testament. In these few verses, we see the great sweep of Christ's life from eternity past to eternity future. We are admitted to the breathtaking purposes of God and human salvation.

These verses are remarkable from the view of early church history. At this time, let us consider them in this context. The apostle Paul is talking about a man, Jesus of Nazareth, who had lived only a generation earlier in Jerusalem.

He is stating tremendous things about Him, yet he says these things in such a way that we know he is neither inventing doctrines nor arguing for a hotly contested position. He is merely presenting what he knew to be the accepted teaching of all the Christian churches.

Paul answers a very important question here: what did it mean for Jesus Christ to become human? It seems like a simple enough question, but the impact is far reaching as you well expect.

Suppose someone said these things about a man who lived in 2015. It would be preposterous and unbelievable in this society. We have here in Philippians 2 a chain of assertions about Jesus Christ made within about 30 years of His death at Jerusalem.

These assertions were made in a settled, common, and living certainty. Paul was convinced absolutely of this as truth. These assertions give us, on the one hand, the fullest possible assurance that He is man; man in nature, circumstance, and experience, and particularly in the sphere in relation to God the Father. But they also assure us, in precisely the same tone and in a way which is equally vital to the argument at hand, that He is as genuinely divine as He is genuinely human.

These verses teach the divinity of Christ; His pre-existence; His equality with God the Father; His incarnation and true humanity; His voluntary death on the cross; the certainty of His ultimate triumph over evil, and the permanence of His reign. What a lot is compressed into these few scriptures here in Philippians 2.

In light of these statements, the foolishness of the views of scholars who attempt to dismiss the true distinct doctrines of Christianity as nothing more than late development in the history of a slowly evolving church, totally ignore the fact that there was no evolution of these doctrines. They are solid, they have been stated from time immemorial, and have been the same. They are the same yesterday, today, and forever, because they are the truth of God.

We will take a closer look at the statement made in this passage about Jesus Christ, however at this point we will take a broader view of the passage. Only after we have seen it in this way, like a mountain climber gazing at the valley of the peak he is going to climb, we will begin to take the step-by-step ascent, as we would a mountain, because it is a mountain of truth.

The first view we have of Jesus is in reference to His pre-incarnate state. Here He is preeminent. Paul says that before the incarnation, Jesus was in the form of God and was God's equal. Now these words do not mean that God has a material form, but rather that Jesus possesses all of God's attributes. That means that He is of the God Family.

Is God omniscient? Yes, and so is Jesus. Is God all powerful? Yes, and so is Jesus. Is God the Creator, the Redeemer, the truth, the life, the past, the present, the future? Yes, and so is Jesus. Paul's phrase, "being in very nature of God" is a deliberate claim of Jesus' divinity. Here Paul's words soar to the same height as John's in the magnificent introduction to his gospel in John 1.

John 1:1-4 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

The same preeminence was taught by Jesus Himself recorded in John 17:5

John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

This is Christ's past glory. It is this great preeminence that gives all value to the citation of Christ's life as the ultimate pattern of humility and self-sacrifice.

The second view of Jesus is in His condescension. Christ had been above all humans, above all angels, yet He became lower than both in love for humans and in obedience to His heavenly Father.

Even Paul, who himself had suffered beatings and shipwrecks, torture and stoning, would never have had to go to the extremes that Jesus suffered. Paul was a Roman citizen and was exempt from crucifixion. There was no depth to which Jesus did not go.

We can imagine the scene that must have taken place in heaven on the eve of Christ's birth. God is omniscient, but the angels are not. The Bible tells us that there are aspects of salvation that the angels do not understand and I Peter 1:12 tells us:

I Peter 1:12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

We must imagine, therefore, that something like rumors of Christ's descent to earth had been in circulation around heaven and that for weeks the angels had been contemplating the form in which Christ would enter human history. Did they think that He would come back as a glorious conqueror? What did the angels think Jesus would come back as? We do not know, it is not written, but it was on their minds.

Would he appear in a blaze of light bursting into the night of the Palestinian countryside, dazzling all who beheld Him? Or perhaps He would appear as a mighty general marching into pagan Rome as Caesar did when he crossed the Rubicon. There was a time that the apostles thought that might eventually happen.

Or perhaps He would come as the wisest of the Greek philosophers, putting the wisdom of Plato and Socrates to foolishness by a supernatural display of intellect.

Instead, there is no display of glory, no pomp, no marching of the feet of the heavenly legions. Christ lays His robes aside, the glory that was His from eternity. He steps down from the heavenly throne and becomes a babe in the arms of a mother, in a far eastern colony of the Roman Empire. At this display of divine condescension the angels are amazed possibly, and they burst into such a crescendo of song that the shepherds hear them on the hills of Bethlehem.

Why did Jesus Christ become human? God the Son became human Himself. He was born into the world as an actual man, a real man of average height and weight, with hair of common color, and speaking the contemporary language.

This humble, average-looking man with God's Holy Spirit empowering Him to live God's way of life was an example of what all humans were intended to be. Jesus Christ became like us, so that we might become like Him. It was God's way of coming to us so we might be redeemed from the penalty of sin and then transformed from within into the image of His Son.

In the second chapter of his epistle to the Philippians, the apostle Paul emphasizes that Jesus Christ, who had all the privileges and status that were rightly His as King of the universe, gave them up to become human with the same susceptibility to disease, injury, and temptation as any human being.

Philippians 2:5-8 Let this mind [or humility] be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

While He had every right to stay comfortably where He was in a position of power and glory, His love drove Him to a position of physical weakness for the sake of sinful mankind.

In this form He entered into all of the ambiguity of a broken world. But Jesus went much farther, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. Crucifixion was not simply a convenient way of executing prisoners, it was the ultimate indignity. It was a public statement by Rome that the crucified one was beyond contempt. The excruciating physical pain was magnified by the degradation and humiliation.

No other form of death, no matter how prolonged or physically agonizing, could match crucifixion as an absolute destruction both within and without of the person. It was the ultimate counterpoint to the divine majesty of the preexistence Christ, and thus was the ultimate expression of Christ's obedience to His Father. The Son became like us, or rather like each of us should be. The thought is breathtaking that any being would do that

Jesus was always God's Son; consequently, as a son, He was given. His human nature dates from the moment of His physical birth in Bethlehem. There is a similar contrast in Romans 1:3-4 where Paul says that God's Son, Jesus Christ, was according to His human nature, a descendant of David, and through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead.

He was born man in the line of His earthly ancestor, David, and in exactly the same way, as the Son of God, He was sent, but He became man.

Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.

In Philippians, the meaning is identical. Paul writes that the one who was in the form of God and was God's equal from all eternity took the form of a man at a particular moment in history. He took upon Himself the nature of a servant and was made in human likeness.

It is interesting that Paul uses three different words: form, likeness, and appearance, in Philippians 2: 6-8, to describe what it meant for the eternal Son of God to become man.

The first word is the Greek word *m orphe*. It occurs in the phrase, "being in the form of, or in the very nature, God" in verse 6. It is precisely the word used earlier when Paul wrote that Christ was "in very nature, God." First, "in very nature, God;" then "in very nature, a servant."

The Greek word *morphe* has different senses in Greek. It refers to the inward character of a thing and also to the outward form that expresses its inward character. So when Paul says Christ took upon Himself the nature of a servant, he means that Christ became man both inwardly and outwardly. Jesus also had inwardly and displayed outwardly, the very nature of God Himself.

In the same way He also took upon Himself the very nature of man both inwardly and outwardly. With the exception of giving in to temptation and being sinful, everything that can be said about a man can be said about Jesus during His stay on earth as a human.

Now let us look a little more closely at this concept of Jesus being in the form of God. In verse 6 Paul writes that before His incarnation Jesus Christ was in the form of God and was God. So who is Jesus Christ? The only adequate answer to that question is one that carries the mind back to Christ's equality with God before creation and which projects it forward to see Him reigning with God and as God forever.

Now to express this, the late Protestant Pastor James Boice recounts the following experience during his trip to Egypt. His point in describing this experience is that what we see on the surface is not the full picture. Pastor Boice writes:

One summer during a trip around the Mediterranean Sea, a friend and I visited Luxor, the city in upper Egypt where tourists may visit the remains of ancient Thebes, once the capital of Egypt.

We began our sightseeing in the company of an old guide who first showed us the great temple of Luxor erected by Amenophis III. On top of one of the tall columns of this temple was a small house, and we were curious about how it got there.

The guide explained that during the last century, before the excavations at Luxor were begun, the area on which we were standing was covered with sand. One local farmer tried to find a solid foundation for his home and scratched about in the sand to find some bedrock on which to build. In time he came upon a smooth surface, and he erected his home here.

In the desert where the wind is constantly blowing and where the sand shifts according to the air currents, anything permanent will cause the sand to shift away from it. As the sand drifted away from his cottage the farmer discovered that his house was actually built on a piece of hand carved stone, presumably from an ancient temple.

It was only after the excavations had begun that the farmer realized that the stone was a standing column, and after the excavations were completed he found that his home was nearly eighty feet above ground level.

There is a parallel here to some people's understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many people claim that their lives are built on Jesus Christ, but they may know as little about Jesus Christ as that Egyptian farmer knew about the foundation of his home.

Many people will admit Christ's existence, acknowledge his example, and speak of him as a great religious teacher. These things are true. Yet by themselves they are as misleading as the Egyptian farmer's belief that he was building his house on bedrock.

If you can say no more about Jesus Christ than this, then you have an inadequate understanding of his person. To see him in proper perspective you must push aside the years of human history and catch a glimpse of him coexisting with God the Father from eternity.

Now the New Testament writers do this frequently. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.” Later John says that the “Word became flesh” but the one who became flesh was no other than the one who existed with God and was God from the beginning. In Colossians 1 Paul says:

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

These things are emphasized throughout Scripture to make sure there is no doubt from where Jesus Christ came and went.

In Hebrews 1, the inspired author presents a similar picture that parallels the one in Philippians 2.

Hebrews 1:1-3 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

These passages teach that Jesus Christ cannot be understood on the basis of His earthly life alone. Jesus Christ was a man, but He was also God during His earthly life. Now back to Philippians 2 again.

Philippians 2:6-7 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

The word equal in verse 6, is from the Greek word *isos*. We have this word in the scientific terms: isomer, isomorph, and isometric. An isomer is a molecule having a slightly different structure from another molecule but being identical with it in terms of its chemical elements and weight. Isomorph means having the same form. Isometric means in equal measure. The word *isos* in verse 6, teaches that Jesus is God’s equal. This does not mean that He was equal in authority. Jesus always does as the Father tells Him.

The second word Paul uses is the Greek word *homoioima*. It describes the incarnation and is the one translated as likeness in verse 7. Paul says that Christ was made in human likeness. The word *morphe* refers to man’s nature; the second word *homoioima* refers to the outward appearance of humanity.

Jesus did not just have a man’s feelings or emotions, He looked like a man also. He was born an Israelite baby, and as He grew He looked like others of His race. From a physical standpoint also He was perfectly man.

The third word Paul uses is the Greek word *schema* which is translated into English as appearance, in verse 8. Paul writes that Jesus was found in appearance as a man. That indicates conformity to human experience.

Paul says that Christ was not only man inwardly, in all his feelings and emotions, or only man outwardly in the sense of physical likeness, but He was also man in the sense that He endured all that we endure in this world: its pressures, its longings, its circumstances, its influences for good and for evil.

Jesus knew and understood all of this and to this day He can relate to each and every one of us and all of our problems, sicknesses, and trials. There is nothing about being human that was not also part of Jesus' experience. How comforting this should be to all of us to know that He understands.

Christ was, at one point, just like you and me, and He experienced all that we have experienced. He knows our problems, and because of that He can help us in the midst of them and He can provide salvation, not only for the life to come but also for this life as we triumph over the things that constantly try to force us into the inward image of this world, which is what we are trying not to be.

That is one of the things that the Days of Unleavened Bread portray. It is the opposite of being in the image of this world. It portrays overcoming that image and everything that connects to it.

Now think of the ways that Jesus Christ became like us. In the first place He became like us in temptation.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest [Christ] who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

We have a summary account of that in Matthew 4. After His baptism, Jesus was driven into the wilderness by God's Spirit where He spent forty days fasting. At the end of this period, Satan came to Him, and the temptations began. The first temptation was physical.

Matthew 4:3-4 Now when the tempter [Satan] came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He [Jesus] answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "

The first temptation was to put physical needs above spiritual ones, and Jesus rejected it on biblical principles as He did with all the temptations of Satan. We have been tempted like this many times and there is nothing inherently wrong with material things. God gives them to us, often abundantly, and we may be thankful when they come from Him. However there is always a temptation to put things in place of God, to seek material objects in place of God and His work in our lives.

The second temptation was a spiritual one. Satan took Jesus up to Jerusalem and sat Him upon a pinnacle of the Temple.

Matthew 4:6 and [Satan] said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.' "

Satan was tempting Christ to presume upon God to place Himself in a situation that was not of God's will and then to expect a supernatural deliverance. Now an example that comes to my mind that humans do to tempt God in a physical way is jumping out of an airplane. That is not a wise thing to do. This is not venturing out on faith but rather it is presumptuousness and Christ said that we should not tempt Him in that way.

We should not try to pressure God to do our bidding through fasting, doing good works, or taking a dangerous leap of faith. Instead we are to go forward under His direction knowing that then He will take care of us and bless our life and witness of His way of life, as we live it. Faith is believing God's Word and acting on it appropriately.

The third temptation was vocational, or you might say occupational or job related. Satan knew that Christ was to receive the kingdoms of this world. This was foretold in Psalm 2.

Psalm 2:8 Ask of Me, and I will give you the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession.

Satan argued that Jesus could have the prize without working for it. Is that not what this world offers, free things to those who do not work for it? Satan said, "Look, the way you're choosing for yourself is the way of suffering and sacrifice. I'll give you these things myself if only you'll fall down and worship me." Again, Jesus set His will to go the way God had chosen for Him.

There is no temptation that comes to us that falls outside the scope of these temptations. There is physical temptation, spiritual temptation, and vocational temptation. Christ shows the path to victory in them all. As He became like us in temptation, so He would have us become like him in our ability to withstand it and triumph over sin as He did.

Jesus not only became like us in temptation, He also became like us in suffering that our suffering might become like His. In the early days of the Christian church there was less persecution for believers than what came later. But as the group of Christians grew and as the force of Christianity became something to reckon with in the social structure of the Roman world, persecution and suffering increased for Christians.

In these times the suffering of Jesus took on a new significance for His followers. An example is found in I Peter. Peter was writing to Christians who were suffering for the stand they had taken for Christ. He writes to encourage them, and as he writes he thinks almost inevitably of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Their suffering was to be like His. They were to suffer patiently without backbiting, without resentment, without anger, without bitterness, dedicating themselves to being true and faithful witnesses of God's way of life.

I Peter 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.

The word example in this verse is very interesting. It refers to a copybook prepared by a teacher for pupils to copy. It is perfect and it is to be the model as the child tries to imitate the teacher's script. Peter says that Jesus became our copybook so that we might pattern our reaction to suffering after His. That is a tall order for human beings and it cannot be done without God's Holy Spirit. Thankfully, as members of God's church, we have God's Holy Spirit.

Finally, Jesus Christ not only became like us in temptation and in suffering but He also became like us in disappointment. Christ wept real tears over Jerusalem. The following verse shows Jesus' lament.

Matthew 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"

You can hear the tone of disappointment there. We may have disappointments with our family or our work. We may be disappointed in love, the affection that we have for another may not be returned. We may think ourselves as a failure or that we lack purpose in life. Christ knows and understands this. He became like us in all our disappointments, and as a result He is able to sympathize with us in our sorrow and give us the strength to conquer sin and any trials that come our way.

He submitted Himself to God's will and relied on Him in faith. God is using temptation, suffering, and disappointment to make us more like Jesus Christ.

Now let me shift gears here to look at His humility. Four times in His ministry Jesus said: "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." That is stated in Matthew 18:4; Matthew 23:12; Luke 14:11; and Luke 18:14.

It was His Father who exalted Him after Jesus humbled Himself. His own life is the greatest example of that principle.

The first half of each clause in the sentence has an active verb. The individual must humble himself rather than exalt himself. The second half of each clause has a passive verb: "will be humbled" and "will be exalted." The individual is exalted *by* God, not by man or by oneself.

Now everything said in Philippians 2:5-8 has Jesus Himself as the subject. He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, He made Himself nothing. He was, and is, obedient. The second half of the passage has God as the subject, and Jesus is passive. In Philippians 2:9-11 we find the picture of Jesus again on the throne of heaven.

Philippians 2:8-11 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So that passage there begins with God in verse 9 and ends with God the Father in verse 11. The New Testament boldly identifies Jesus as glory, and in doing so it weaves together nearly all the strands of glory. Glory pervades the divine genealogy that John provides for Jesus at the beginning of his Gospel.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

How glorious that Jesus Christ will reign, and God the Father will see to it. If we are humble and obedient we will see Him and bow before Him and be joyous to do so. Jesus speaks of this glory when He prays here in John 17.

John 17:4-5 “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”

These verses say four things about glory. 1) That Jesus possessed a glory before the incarnation. 2) That this glory was God’s glory. 3) That He did not have that glory after the incarnation. 4) That there is a sense in which He did possess glory while on earth, because He revealed it by finishing the work that God gave him to do.

Now how can this be? How can Christ possess God’s glory, renounce it, and yet have it? And, what does the phrase “the glory of God” mean? To help us understand this concept of “the glory of God,” let me take you through a short lesson on etymology.

What is etymology? Here is what Webster’s Dictionary says about etymology. It is the origin and development of a word, affix, or phrase. It is the tracing of a word or other form back as far as possible in its own language and to its source in earlier languages.

In the early years of the Greek language when Homer and Herodotus were writing, there was a Greek verb, *dokeo*, from which the Greek noun *doxa*, meaning glory, sprang. The Greek verb meant “to appear” or “to seem,” and the noun that came from it meant “opinion.”

From this meaning we get the English words: orthodox, meaning straight opinion; heterodox, meaning other opinion; and paradox, meaning contrary opinion.

In time the verb was used only for having a good opinion about some person. The noun, which kept pace with the verb in its development, came to mean the praise or honor due to one of whom a good opinion was held. Kings possessed glory because they merited the praise of their subjects. It is in this sense that Psalm 24 speaks of God as the King of glory.

Psalm 24:8-10 Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah

At this point, we can see the effect of taking the word over into the Bible and applying it to God, because if a person had a right opinion about God, he was able to form a correct opinion of God’s attributes.

The orthodox Jew knew God as all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present, merciful, faithful to His children, holy, just, loving, and so on, with all His other perfections. When the Jew acknowledged this he was said to give God glory.

God’s glory consists of His intrinsic worth embedded in His character, and all that can be known of God is merely an expression of it. This understanding of God’s glory is reinforced in the English

language by a word that means almost the same thing as glory. This is the Anglo-Saxon word “worth.” It too, refers to intrinsic character. The worth of a person is his or her character. The worth of God is God’s glory.

Consequently, when people are engaged in praising God they are acknowledging His worth-ship. Since these last two syllables are difficult to say together in English, a number of the consonants have been dropped, and our present word ‘worship’ is the result.

In philology, which is the study of language in ancient texts, the worship of God, the praise of God, and the giving of glory to God are identical. It is this glory, a glory that embodies the idea of God’s intrinsic worth and character that Jesus claimed to share and to have made known to His disciples.

John 17:22-24 “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them [speaking about His disciples and us], that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

Jesus said that He had given His disciples the glory which His Father had given Him. Now there are three main ways in which the glory of Jesus is referred in the New Testament. The first way is, the knowledge of the glory of God is also His glory.

II Corinthians 4:3-6 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

In verse 6, the phrase “to give the light of” shows the object or the effect of enlightening or opening the mind. In this way we may behold the divine glory. The purpose is to enlighten and instruct us concerning the knowledge of the glory of God. The purpose of His shining in our hearts is to give light, that is, to enlighten; and the purpose of that light is to acquaint us with the knowledge of the divine glory.

The phrase “in the face of Jesus Christ” means that we might obtain the knowledge of the divine glory as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ; or, as it is reflected on the face of the Redeemer. How is it reflected? By His intrinsic worth and example in character or, in other words, by His holy perfections.

There is an allusion here to what is said of Moses in II Corinthians 3:13, when the divine glory was reflected on his face, and produced such a splendor and magnificence that the children of Israel could not look upon it.

II Corinthians 3:13 unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.

The sense here is, that in the face or the person of Jesus Christ, the glory of God shone clearly and the holiness appeared without a veil. The word rendered "face" here can mean either face or person. The holy perfections shone in and through the Redeemer are manifested in the following ways: The glory of the divine nature is seen in Him, since He is the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person (as we find described in Hebrews 1:3).

Hebrews 1:3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high

It is in and through Him that the glory of the holy perfections are made known. Also the glory of the divine attributes is made known through Him, since it is through Him that the work of creation was accomplished.

John 1:3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

And it is by Him that the mercy and goodness of God have been manifested to people. The glory of the divine moral character is also seen through Him, since when on earth, He manifested the embodied holy perfections. There is not one of the holy attributes or perfections, that we know of, which has not at some time or in some form, been manifested by Jesus Christ.

The second way in which the glory of Jesus is referred to in the New Testament is that Jesus' perfect obedience to the will of God was His glory.

We find our glory, not in doing as we like, but in doing as God wills. When we try to do as we like, as many of us have done, we find nothing but sorrow and disaster both for ourselves and for others. We find the real glory of life in doing God's will. The greater the humble submission and obedience, the greater the glory.

The third way that the glory of Jesus is referred to in the New Testament is that Jesus' glory lay in the fact that, from His life, people recognized His special relationship with God. They saw that no one could live as He did unless He was uniquely near to God.

As with Christ, it is our glory when people see in us the reflection of God, His character, His attributes, or whatever He may decide to give us through His Spirit. We must do our part as well in working on being like Jesus, our example.

Christ said that it was His will that His disciples should see His glory in the heavenly places. It is our conviction that we will share all the experiences of Christ. If we have to share in Christ's suffering, we will also share His glory.

II Timothy 2:11-12 This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.

We are joined at the hip, so to speak, with Jesus Christ. Here in this world, at best, we see dimly in a mirror, but when we are resurrected we will see Him face to face. The joy we have now is only a faint foretaste of the joy which is to come.

It is Christ's promise that if we share His glory and His sufferings on earth, we will share His glory and His triumph when we rise to meet Him. What greater promise could there be than that and could we be any more encouraged by that?

When Jesus was to go straight out to the betrayal, the trial, and the crucifixion; He was not to speak to His disciples again. It is a wonderful and a precious thing to remember that before those terrible hours His last words were not of despair but rather of glory.

Now let me shift gears here. What does it mean when the disciples are said to have beheld Christ's glory at the wedding feast in Cana? It means that the disciples beheld His character and that this was the character of God. If you have seen Jesus in this way, you have seen the Father.

John 14:9-10 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works."

Jesus made a claim and offered a test, based on two things: His words and His works. First, He claimed to be tested by what He said. It is as if Jesus said: "When you listen to Me, can you not realize immediately that what I am saying is God's own truth?"

In the end there is something which defies analysis, but nevertheless is easily and immediately recognized. This is true of the words of Jesus. When we hear the Words of Christ we cannot help saying: "If only the world would live by these principles, how different it would be!" Or, "If only I would live by these principles, how different I would be!"

Secondly, He claimed to be tested by His deeds. He said to Philip: "If you can't believe in Me because of what I say, surely you will allow what I can *do* to convince you." That was the same answer that Jesus sent back to John the Baptizer when he sent his messengers to ask whether Jesus was the Messiah, or if they must look for another.

Matthew 11:1-6 Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

Jesus' proof is that no one else ever succeeded in making bad men good or, sick people well. In effect, Jesus said to Philip: "Listen to Me! Look at Me! And believe Me!" The way to Christian belief is not to argue about Jesus but to listen to Him and to look at His example and to look at what He did.

Now alongside this concept there is an entirely different meaning of the word glory, which entered the Greek language at a later time only through its contact with Hebrew religion and culture. It is the idea of light or splendor, and it is found in the Greek language only after the translation of the Old Testament into Greek.

In Hebrew thought, any outward manifestation of God's presence involved a display of light so brilliant that a person could not approach it. This brilliant outward manifestation of God's presence was described by the Hebrew word *shekinah*. In the Greek Old Testament the word *doxa* is often used to translate it.

This glory was the radiance that was transferred to the face of Moses during the days he spent upon Mount Sinai with God. It was embodied in the cloud that overshadowed the wilderness tabernacle during the years of Israel's wandering.

Also, glory accompanied the angels as they appeared to the shepherds to announce the birth of Jesus. It was the glory of Jesus that the disciples saw on the mount of transfiguration. Glory filled the sky when Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, and it left him blinded. It is this glory with which Jesus will be clothed when He returns for those who believe in Him and who await His coming.

Put these two meanings of the word glory together and you have a clear picture of Christ's oneness with God and of the humbling of Himself when He became a man. Before His incarnation Jesus Christ existed with God and was identical with God both inwardly and outwardly. He shared the full the divine nature, and He was clothed with the splendor that had always surrounded God.

During the incarnation Jesus laid aside the outward glory, which would have made it impossible for human beings to approach Him, and took the form of a servant. What remained was God's glory in the inward sense, for even in the flesh Jesus Christ was God and retained all of the divine nature.

In the garden just before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed that He might once more receive the visible glory that He had enjoyed with God before He became man. And He received this when He ascended again into heaven and took His rightful place with God the Father.

Since Jesus Christ perfectly manifests God's glory, we also are to share that same glory, as amazing and as unbelievable as that may seem to the human mind. Paul writes in II Corinthians 3,

II Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

In the preceding verses Paul had been speaking of the veil worn by Moses so that the people might not be blinded by His reflected glory, but now he says it is different. Now there is no veil between the believer and his Lord. We see Him in Scripture, and in Him we see God's glory, which means we see God's worth and character. As we see it, we are changed into the same likeness by the presence of His Spirit in us. But that is not all—one day we will participate even in the visible glory.

However, the work begun by Christ's atonement and applied to each believer at the moment of his or her conversion does not remain unfinished, but continues throughout the life of the true Christian. It continues through daily victory over sin to the moment when the entire company of the redeemed stands spotless in the glorious presence of the Father.

In that day, the glorified body of the faithful will appear as a brilliant jewel, refracting in a million ways the bright radiance of Him who is the Father of lights and of His Son in whom there is no darkness at all. You and I will not only point to that radiance, we will also participate in it, to the glory of God.

In the New Testament there is an emphasis on the way in which we will share the glory of Christ. Peter speaks of being a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed in I Peter 5.

I Peter 5:1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:

I Peter 5:10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

Paul writes in II Corinthians 4 that:

II Corinthians 4:17-18 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Paul told the Colossian church members in Colossians 1 and 3 that:

Colossians 1:27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 3:4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

These references are just the tip of the iceberg. Glory is one of the great positive images of the Bible.

The sufferings of Christ do have great value as an example. The verses in Philippians 2 refer to the sufferings of Jesus as an example for Christians of patience, humility, and obedience to the will of God.

In I Peter, the patient endurance of Jesus is brought forward as an example to those who were suffering under the strictures of an unyielding Roman rule. Peter writes that they were called to suffer patiently, adding that “Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example.”

All this is true. Yet the New Testament never forgets the unbridgeable gulf that exists between the suffering of Christ and human suffering. Christ suffered innocently, and this cannot be said in the same way even of the most “innocent” person. Peter adds, by way of explanation, in I Peter 2,

I Peter 2:24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

If the idea of an example does not exhaust the meaning of Christ's sufferings, what do Christ's sufferings really mean? Jesus Christ died to remove sin. He died to satisfy divine justice. He died to reveal God's love.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

With eternal life comes glory. It is a love that sees things as they are and yet moves to punish sin so that love may be established in righteousness. This love is seen in God's sacrifice of His Son and in Christ's own voluntary sacrifice.

There is hardly a verse in the Bible that speaks of God's love without speaking in the same context, sometimes even in the same sentence, of Christ's sacrifice, death, and resurrection.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Christ's sacrifice, death, and resurrection are the measure of God's love for us. We should certainly be reflecting His love in our relationship with others. In this we glorify God.

After all, Jesus became like us with all our temptation, suffering, and disappointment, so that we might become like Him, humble, patiently enduring, loving, and forgiving.

May we all live our lives to the glory of God and our Savior Jesus Christ!