

**CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER**

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<b>Series:</b>	<b>The Nicene Creed</b>		Pastor/Teacher
<b>Number:</b>	<b>33</b>		Gary L.W. Johnson
<b>Text:</b>	<b>Hebrews 2:9; 1 Peter 1:11</b>		
<b>Date:</b>	<b>December 15, 2024 (a.m.)</b>		

**. . . WITH GLORY**

The late James Boice wrote these very relevant remarks shortly before his death. “A few years ago, Professor Martin Marty, always a shrewd observer of the American church, said in a magazine interview that, in judgment, evangelicals would be *the most worldly people in America* by the end of the century. Marty’s observations are not always right, in my opinion, but in this case he is on target. Evangelicals have embraced worldliness in the same ways that it was embraced by the liberal churches. Like those liberals of past years evangelicals today: (1) *Pursue the world’s wisdom*. Evangelicals are not heretics, of course, at least not consciously. If they are asked whether the Bible is the authoritative and inerrant Word of God, most will answer affirmatively. But many have abandoned the Bible all the same because they do not think it is adequate for the challenges we face as we enter a new millennium. They do not think it is sufficient for winning people to Christ, so they turn to felt-need sermons, to entertainment, or to *signs and wonders*. They do not think the Scriptures are sufficient for achieving genuine Christian growth, so they turn to therapy groups or defer to Christian counseling. They do not think the Bible is sufficient for discovering the will of God for their lives, so they look for mystical signs or subjective feelings. They do not think it is sufficient for impacting the secular society that surrounds us, so they fund lobby groups in Washington or throw their efforts into electing increasingly larger numbers of *born-again* government officials. (2) *Embrace the world’s theology*. Like the liberals before us, evangelicals use the Bible’s words but give them new meanings. Sin becomes *dysfunctional behavior*. Salvation becomes *self-esteem* or *wholeness*. Faith becomes *possibility thinking*. Jesus becomes more of an example for right living than our Savior from sin. People are told how to succeed in business, have happy marriages, and raise nice children, but not how to get right with an offended God. (3) *Follow the world’s agenda*. The world’s major agenda is not hunger, racism, the redistribution of wealth, or ecology. The world’s major agenda is being happy, and happiness is achieving the maximum amount of personal peace and sufficient prosperity to enjoy it. But is that not the bottom line of much evangelical preaching today? Being happy? Being content? Being satisfied? Francis Schaeffer saw it and called the evangelical church to repentance, but we are too self-satisfied to do that. Far be it from us to preach a Gospel that would expose our liberal-like sins and drive us to the Savior. (4) *Employ the world’s methods*. Evangelicals have become like liberals in this area too. How else are we to explain the stress so many place on numerical growth and money? How else are we to explain that so many pastors tone down the hard edges of Bible truth in order to attract greater numbers to their services . . . A recent column in the *New Yorker* magazine bemoaned what it called the *brave, new audience-driven preaching* of our day. *The preacher, instead of looking out upon the world, looks out upon public opinion, trying to find out about the world, discovers nothing but its own reflection. The unexamined world, meanwhile, drifts blindly into the future.*”<sup>1</sup> To put it concisely, all that Boice has described amounts to idolatry. Say what you will about evangelical zeal and evangelistic energy, idolatry is something that not only dishonors the God we claim to worship and serve, but it also provokes His judgment, because He is a jealous God. In Isaiah 42:8, we read: “I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images.”

What is this *glory*? Steve Wellum helpfully explains by first noting, “God’s *glory* is not really an attribute of God. Rather, it is a way of capturing God’s *beauty, wonder, perfection, and blessedness*. In many ways, the glory of God refers to the integrated unity of the diversity of divine attributes in the single being of God. J. I. Packer helpfully speaks of God’s glory as his *deity on display*. In Scripture, *glory* (Heb. *Kabod*; Gk. *Doxa*) refers to the plenitude of God’s perfections, along with God’s *honor* and *excellent reputation* (Isa. 43:7); John 17:5; Rom. 3:23). *Kabod* connotes the idea of weight or heaviness. When applied to God, it conveys the truth that God alone is God, the God of reality and *weight*, in contrast to the idols who are not real, and who blow in the wind like chaff. *Doxa* picks up the same truth, referring to *God’s manifestation of his person, presence, and/or works, especially his power, judgment, and salvation.*”<sup>2</sup>

The noted Puritan Thomas Manton, in his exposition of John 17:22, where Christ speaks of the glory He had with the Father, makes this observation on how the word *glory* is used in the New Testament: “For the meaning of the words, all the difficulty is, what is meant by the glory here spoken of? Some say by *glory* is meant the power of working miracles, that is called the glory of God: John 10:40, *Said I not, If thou wouldst believe, thou shalt see the glory of God?*, that is, a glorious miracle wrought by him. When Christ wrought a miracle, John 2:11, *He manifested forth his glory*. And so they limit it to the apostles, who had gifts of miracles, and were fitted to succeed Christ upon earth: thus many of the ancients. By the glory of God is sometimes meant the image of God: Rom. 3:23, *All have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God*; so 2 Cor. 3:18, *We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory*. That glory which we lost in Adam and want by nature is restored to us in Christ. Some by glory understand the Spirit, who is called a *Spirit of glory*, and was given to Christ without measure, and from him to us, as a means of union between us and Christ, and between us and believers. Others understand it of the honour of filiation; as Christ was a son by nature, so are we by grace: John 1:14, *We behold his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father*; and ver. 12, *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God*. It is an honour: it is a means of union. Adoption maketh way for union with Christ, and Christ left us the relation of brethren, that we might love one another, for we are brethren. But by glory I suppose is meant rather the happiness of the everlasting state, which is usually called glory in scripture; and so it is taken, ver. 24, *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me*. And there is the most perfect union with Christ; and we that expect one heaven, should not fall out by the way.”<sup>3</sup>

- I. **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GLORY.** Poythress points out that, “The term *glory* (Hebrew *kabod*) has associations not only with brightness but with splendor, majesty, and honor. The visible appearing of God manifests his splendor and majesty. It manifests the character of God, which is supremely glorious and worthy of honor. These associations are such that the term *glory* can also be used where it is not clear whether there is any *extraordinary* visible display. In the exodus, God gets *glory* over Pharaoh (Ex. 14:4, 17-18). And in Isaiah 6:3 the whole earth, not merely the vicinity of God’s throne, is *full of his glory*. *The heavens declare the **glory** of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork* (Ps. 19:1). The splendor of the character of God is displayed not merely in what is extraordinary, but every day in the things that he has made: *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly **perceived**, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.*” (Rom. 1:20).”<sup>4</sup>
- II. **THE REVELATION OF GLORY PAR EXCELLENCE.** We noted in our last study that the Second Coming is described by three highly descriptive words: *Parousia, apocalypse* and *epiphany*. Vos makes this important observation: “The flavor attaching to the term *apocalypsis* differs somewhat from that carried by the term *Parousia*. The latter concerns believers chiefly, the former the enemies of God’s people, though in neither case exclusively so. In 2 Thess. 1:7, 8, the militant revelation is described in the following terms: *At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus*. To believers the appearance of Christ will partake of the character of a *revelation*,

inasmuch as his glory has not been visibly disclosed to them before. The idea is in all passages plainly implied, that Jesus' eschatological revelation will bear the features of a strictly momentary, miraculous act. While things preceding and preparing for it do not, of course, lack all gradual and orderly unfolding, yet the event itself is catastrophic in the absolute sense, nay this very idea of suddenness and unexpectedness seem to be intimately associated with the word. Hence of the *Anomos* of 2 Thess. 2:3, 6, 8 an *Anomos* is predicted; many forces may after a hidden, mysterious manner work towards the ripeness of the time for his activity, nonetheless he is to be revealed *in his time*.”<sup>5</sup>

III. **THE NATURE OF HIS GLORIOUS APPEARING.** In 1 Corinthians 1:7, the Apostle Paul uses the word *apokalypsis* to describe the rapture. In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8, this same word is now used of the Second Coming, clearly suggesting that the rapture and the Second Coming are one and the same. Angels accompany Him. Angels are “spirits,” Hebrews 1:14, i.e., they have not material bodies as men have; they are either human in form, or can assume the human form when necessary, cp. Luke 24:4 with v. 23, Acts 10:3 with v. 30. They are usually represented as arrayed in white, and as dazzling the eye with their brightness, Matthew 28:2, 3, cp. 2 Corinthians 11:14. They are called “holy,” Mark 8:38, and “elect,” 1 Timothy 5:21, in contrast with some of their original number, Matthew 25:41, who “sinned,” 2 Peter 2:4 (“left their proper habitation,” Jude 6, *oikētērion*, a word which occurs again in the New Testament only, 2 Cor. 5:2). Angels are always spoken of in the masculine gender, the feminine form of the word does not occur in the Scriptures. Angels are frequently associated with Christ in connection with His redemptive and mediatorial work; they announced His birth, Matthew 1:20; Luke 2:8-14, resurrection, Matthew 28:2-6, and return, Acts 1:10; they ministered to Him after His temptation in the wilderness, Mark 1:13, and in Gethsemane, Luke 22:43; they will attend Him at His return to judgment, Matthew 16:27 and here, and are the agents by whom His judgments will be executed. Matthew 13:39, 41, 49; 24:31. In that day they will be called upon to worship Him, Hebrews 1:6, quoted from LXX of Deuteronomy 32:41-43, which reads: *I will render judgment to my enemies, and will recompense them that hate me . . . Rejoice ye heavens, with Him, and let all the angels of God worship Him*; cp. Psalm 97:7.<sup>6</sup> Poythress highlights this by saying, “Angels, fire, glory, and coming from heaven all belong in the context of the coming of God to earth, which here takes place in the coming of Christ. It is the fulfillment of earlier Old Testament comings in theophany. Once again, the purpose of giving this picture of the second coming is practical: *To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ* (vv. 11-12).”<sup>7</sup>

**CONCLUSION:** “The Christian hope of the Second Coming,” writes Peter Lewis, “looks forward to a great event that will end world history as we know it, consummating the promises of God as we now have them. The Second Coming will usher in a new and endless age: the age of the new heavens and the new earth. Yet the true greatness of this event, and its full significance, does not lie in its magnitude nor its ultimacy for world history. It is an event dominated by a person; Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the church's Lord. He shall come in love for His own as well as in judgment for the world. His return to earth is described as that of the bridegroom coming for His bride (Matthew 25:1-13; Revelation 22:17). Therefore we should be less taken up with the details and form of events than the knowledge that we shall meet the Lord, face-to-face (1 Thessalonians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 12:12). The meeting is more important than the mechanics, the *how* must give way to the *who* of the Second Coming. Before the fact of our Lord's personal return all other *facts* of tribulation, millennium, Armageddon, rapture, etc., fade into a truly subordinate place. And where Christians write on the great event they should not be alienated from one another by the current orthodoxies of evangelical opinion. Our Lord, our Savior, and our love is coming – and coming for us. In that we can all rejoice. To speak of His *return*, however obviously implies His absence; and Scripture is quite clear about this. Jesus told His disciples that He was *going away* and that they would see Him no

more (John 16:5, 7, 10), but that He would one day *come again* and take them to be where He himself was going (John 14:3). Peter speaks of Him as the one *raised . . . to life* and *exalted to the right hand of God*, abiding in heaven until the appointed day of judgment (Acts 2:32-33; 3:20-21). And Paul recognizes that the Lord is seated with God *in the heavenly realms*, from which He shall one day come (Ephesians 1:20; 2:6; 1 Thessalonians 4:16). There is thus a real absence of her Lord for the church to understand.”<sup>8</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> J. M. Boice, “Running With Wolves,” *Table Talk* (Aug., 2000), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> S. J. Wellum, *Systematic Theology: From Canon to Concept I* (B&H Academic, 2024), p. 625.

<sup>3</sup> *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton XI* (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1995), p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> Vern S. Poythress, *Theophany: A Biblical Theology of God’s Appearing* (P&R, 2018), p. 55.

<sup>5</sup> G. Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (rpt. Baker Book House, 1979), p. 78. In a footnote he adds: “In the First Epistle of Peter, where the idea of the hidden invisible existence of Jesus and his salvation in heaven is stressed, the eschatological usage of *revelation* is likewise in evidence; cp. i. 13; v. 4. In i. 20 the word is *phaneroun* instead of *apokaluptein*. This passage is a striking proof for the eternal actual preexistence of Christ. *Foreknown before the ages* and *manifested in these last times* yields an impossible contrast, unless *foreknown* be given the pregnant sense of *eternally beloved as an existing being*.”

<sup>6</sup> cf. W. E. Vine, *Expository Commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (rpt. Nelson, 1997), p. 169.

<sup>7</sup> Poythress, *op. cit.*, p. 404.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Lewis, *The Glory of Christ* (Moody Press, 1997), p. 419.