

## WORDS MEAN THINGS: GLORY

In my book, *The Preeminence of Christ: Part One, To the Glory of God the Father*, I wrote:

*Glory* is one of those words that is so frequent in the Scriptures that we can begin to take it for granted without being conscious of its full meaning or significance. *Glory is the manifestation of one's nature that results in praise and fame.* Sometimes glory refers directly to the praise that is the result of seeing the manifestation of one's being (e.g., "Give God the glory [honor and praise] due to Him").<sup>1</sup>

God's glory is the *radiance* of His Being, which brings Him praise. Among John Piper's many helpful words on the glory of God, I particularly like his simple definition: "the *going public* of his infinite worth."<sup>2</sup> He also writes of it as "the beauty and greatness of God's manifold perfections" because "specific aspects of God's being are said to have glory. For example: 'the glory of his grace' (Ephesians 1:6) and 'the glory of his might' (2 Thessalonians 1:9)."<sup>3</sup> God's glory is the *shining forth* of His holiness, goodness, power, love, justice, mercy, etc. When God *shows* Himself, He glorifies Himself.<sup>4</sup>

For further substantiation of this manner of defining *glory*, consider these additional sources. John N. Oswalt teaches the basic meaning of the Hebrew root, *kbd*:

The basic meaning is "to be heavy, weighty," a meaning which is only rarely used literally, the figurative (e.g. "heavy with sin") being more common. From this figurative usage it is an easy step to the concept of a "weighty" person in society, someone who is honorable, impressive, worthy of respect.<sup>5</sup>

James M. Hamilton, Jr., works this root meaning into his definition:

I would suggest that the glory of God is the weight of the majestic goodness of who God is, and the resulting name, or reputation, that he gains from his revelation of himself as Creator, Sustainer, Judge, and Redeemer, perfect in justice and mercy, loving-kindness and truth.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The book footnotes: E.g., 1 Chron. 16:28-29; Isa. 42:8; Jer. 13:15. Tremper Longman III writes, "Fourth, glory elicits praise. Indeed, the verb related to the noun *kabod* may be translated 'praised.' In other words, to 'glorify' someone is to attribute weight or substance to him" ("The Glory of God in the Old Testament" in *The Glory of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan & Robert A. Peterson [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010], 78). Richard R. Melick, Jr., adds, "In Matthew and Mark the noun *glory* involves a revelation of true character, while the verb involves acknowledging that character. People 'glorify' by appreciating the character observed" ("The Glory of God in the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, and the General Epistles," in *ibid.*, 82).

<sup>2</sup> The book footnotes: John Piper, "What is God's glory?" 6 Jul 2009 ([desiringGod.org/interviews/what-is-gods-glory](http://desiringGod.org/interviews/what-is-gods-glory), emphasis mine).

<sup>3</sup> The book footnotes: John Piper, "Rebuilding Some Basics of Bethlehem: The Centrality of the Glory of God," 4 Nov 2009 ([desiringGod.org/articles/rebuilding-some-basics-of-bethlehem-the-centrality-of-the-glory-of-god](http://desiringGod.org/articles/rebuilding-some-basics-of-bethlehem-the-centrality-of-the-glory-of-god)).

<sup>4</sup> Spencer Stewart, *The Preeminence of Christ: Part One, To the Glory of God the Father* (Lawrence, KS: Project one28, 2017), 6-7 (see [ProjectOne28.com/glory](http://ProjectOne28.com/glory)).

<sup>5</sup> "kābēd," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1980), 426.

<sup>6</sup> *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 56.

In my book I skipped the root sense of weightiness in order to simplify – and because of quotes like this, again from Oswalt:

Over against the transience of human and earthly glory stands the unchanging beauty of the manifest God (Ps 145:5). In this sense the noun *kabod* takes on its most unusual and distinctive meaning. Forty-five times this form of the root relates to a visible manifestation of God.... Its force is so compelling that it remolds the meaning of *doxa* from an opinion of men in the Greek classics to something absolutely objective in the LXX and NT.... It is not merely God's reputation which fills the earth, but it is the very reality of his presence. And his desire is that all persons may gladly recognize and own this.<sup>7</sup>

Sverre Aalen teaches:

It suggests something which radiates from the one who has it, leaving an impression behind.... used for appearance, i.e. for the manifestation of a person... it does not mean God in his essential nature, but the luminous manifestation of his person, his glorious revelation of himself.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to these, I would draw special attention to the content of footnote 7 on pages 7-8 of my book:

Piper teaches the unique connection of holiness and glory through Isaiah 6:3. the seraphim in the temple were crying, "Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts; the whole earth is full of his..." – where Piper inserts his point: "you would expect them to say 'holiness' and they say 'glory'" (n. 3). Therefore, he teaches, "The holiness of God is his concealed glory. The glory of God is his revealed holiness" ("To Him Be Glory Forevermore," 17 Dec 2006 ([desiringGod.org/messages/to-him-be-glory-forevermore](http://desiringGod.org/messages/to-him-be-glory-forevermore))). Piper also points to the parallelism in Leviticus 10:3: "'I will be shown to be *holy* among those who are near me, and before all the people I will be *glorified*.' When God shows himself to *be* holy, what we *see* is his glory – the *beauty* of holiness" (*ibid.*, emphasis his). *Holy* basically means set apart. Piper teaches: "God is *holy* means that God is in a class of perfection and greatness and value by himself. ...His holiness is his *utterly unique and perfect divine essence*" (*ibid.*, emphasis his). Therefore, placing holiness at the center of the definition says essentially the same thing as my basic definition above: the manifestation of His *Being* (which is holy). But the connection of glory as displayed holiness particularly enriches understanding in Scriptures like the quotation of Ezekiel 36:21-23 on page 42.

For these and other reasons, I defined *glory* as "the manifestation of one's nature that results in praise and fame." This word is so important because the ultimate reason for all of God's works from Creation through Redemption to Consummation is His glory. For a concise survey of this fact from Genesis to Revelation, I offer my book as a free PDF ([ProjectOne28.com/glory](http://ProjectOne28.com/glory)). There one can also find exposition of God's own definition of His glory in answer to Moses' prayer (Ex. 33:18-20, 34:6-7) – and its ultimate expression on the Cross of Christ.

*"...to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen" (Rom. 16:25).*

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<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, 427.

<sup>8</sup> "Glory, Honour," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 44, 45.