ONE NEW HUMANITY



Glory, Violence, and the Gospel of Peace

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WITH BRAD VAUGHN

Afterword by D. Zac Niringiye

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One New Humanity: Glory, Violence, and the Gospel of Peace
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Published by William Carey Publishing
10 W. Dry Creek Cir
Littleton, CO 80120 | www.missionbooks.org

William Carey Publishing is a ministry of Frontier Ventures
Pasadena, CA | www.frontierventures.org

Cover and Interior Design: Werner Mischke

ISBNs: 978-1-64508-610-9 (paperback)
978-1-64508-612-3 (epub)

Printed Worldwide

30 29 28 27 26 2 3 4 5 6 IN

Library of Congress Control Number: 2025930809

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Chapter 1

LONGING FOR GLORY

"Glory is the relational beauty that every person's heart yearns to behold and even to enter."
—Steve Hawthorne

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Humans have a built-in longing for glory, for the deep experience of relational beauty, in a story larger than ourselves.
- The story finds its climax in the glorious God-Man, Jesus.

Kristin:

Jesus says there is a connection between God's glory and the peace and unity of his disciples. And the social sciences affirm the other side of the same coin: connections between shame, division, and violence. We define shame as our human response when glory has been lost, degraded, or despised by sin. We will say more about this in chapter 3. But first, we need to understand the foundational, created glory for which we are made.

Both the Scriptures and the social sciences draw a connection between shame and violence—and glory and peace. And even in "secular" violence studies, there are those who advocate for including spirituality in the discussion. But we haven't found many places where the two have been read together on the crucial topics of violence and division. And we have found fewer places bringing non-Western perspectives.

If Jesus says that the glory of the Father will cause us to be one—even as he and the Father are one—what is this glory?

Growing up in church, I thought of "glory" as bright and shiny. I might have imagined rays of light shining from the face of Jesus, or maybe an American football player who makes a touchdown and points to the sky to say, "Glory to God!" I knew that we should give God glory and not seek our own. Overall, I thought glory was about attention, flashiness, or getting credit.

And then when I was sixteen, my mom, my brother, and I were in a car accident near our home in Thailand. We were all hospitalized, and my mom suffered a traumatic brain injury which left her in a coma. Our whole world was upended.

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I was wheelchair-bound for nearly three months while we waited for what would happen to my mom. At any moment we might hear that she had woken up and was waiting to see us, that she had died, or almost any possibility in between. What if she woke up and couldn't remember who we were? What if she woke up severely impaired or with a different personality?

Every afternoon, I wheeled myself up to the hospital's seventh floor where a rooftop garden overlooked the city of Bangkok. As the sun set in the monsoon sky's incredible arrays of cloud and color, I would read. One afternoon, I opened my Bible to Romans 8, and the words leapt from the page: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (8:18). Suddenly, I knew that glory wasn't quite what I had thought. The glory of Romans 8 was not pristine, sparkly, or pretty. Here, glory was battered, wounded, limping, and grieving. It was less about "success" and more about suffering.

I turned to my Bible's concordance and searched for "glory":

> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. (2 Cor 4:17)
>
> But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death. (Heb 2:9)

My idea of glory now carried a weight it never had before. Sitting in a wheelchair on the hospital rooftop, with my mom lying in the ICU two floors below me, and the magnificent sun setting behind the monsoon clouds—I had begun to taste glory. The glory for which creation longs (Rom 8:19–21) is not about scoring a touchdown at the Super Bowl. Glory is heavy—almost unbearably so.

And furthermore—contrary to what I grew up believing—glory is something that we were made to long for and to seek. "To those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life" (Rom 2:7).

How we define glory, and *where* we seek it, will become the stuff and substance of our lives. Whose table do we want to be invited to? Who do we want to celebrate us, and what do we want to be celebrated for? What are we willing to suffer for? This will become who and what we are. It will determine how we respond when the worst trials come, and when the fate of our souls depends on it.

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Defining Glory in the Hebrew Scriptures

For the earth will be filled
with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.
—Habakkuk 2:14

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word for "glory" is *chabod,* often translated as "weight" or "heaviness." The apostle Paul might have had this in mind when he contrasted our light and momentary affliction with an eternal *weight* of glory (2 Cor 4:17).

God will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to an idol (Isa 42:8). Glory is given to God for what he has done in the world (Isa 42:12–13). It is sung and shouted with joy as a spontaneous reaction to his revelation (Isa 24:14–16; 42:11). It is an expression of gratitude (Ps 86:12), reverence, humility, and fear (Isa 25:3; Ps 22:23; Jer 13:16). Glory has to do with authority, significance, status (Ps 8:5; Jer 48:17–18), majesty, and splendor (Job 40:10; Ps 21:5).

Glory is connected to fruitfulness, wealth, and abundance (Gen 31:1). When the glory of Jacob is brought low, it results in leanness, scarcity, and lack (Isa 17:4–6). By contrast, when the dry land blossoms, glory is given to it (Isa 4:2; 35:1–3).

But glory also has to do with moral uprightness and beauty (Isa 62:2; Ps 97:6). When Moses makes the bold request to be shown the glory of the Lord, the Lord replies, "I will cause all of my goodness to pass before you" (Exod 33:19)—not "my power," or "my impressive acts," but *my goodness.*

Steve Hawthorne says that "Glory is the relational beauty that every person's heart yearns to behold and even to enter." This relational beauty is the fullest expression of the inherent worth of the Creator himself, of every human being, and of every created thing.[1] Glory can be individual, but it is also shared (Ps 21:5). God's glory makes people glorious. And the reverse is also true—God stakes some of his own glory and reputation on his people (Isa 43:7; 48:9–11; Ps 79:9).

Finally, glory is often synonymous with the *honor, being, essence,* and *presence* of a person (Gen 49:6; Ps 7:5; 30:12). God's glory first appears in the form of a cloud in the wilderness (Exod 16:10) and remains on Sinai while the covenant and the Torah is given (Exod 24:16). Deuteronomy describes darkness, gloom, and fire on the mountain (Deut 4:11). The people are terrified at what they see and hear (5:24). When Moses

1 Hawthorne, "The Story of His Glory," in Winter and Hawthorne, *Perspectives*, 49.

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makes the bold request to be shown God's glory, God confirms that "man shall not see me and live." Nevertheless, he says, "While my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen" (Exod 33:20–23).

When Moses returns from this encounter, his face shines with an overwhelming radiance. Even the face which has seen *the back* of God's glory becomes almost unendurable to behold (Exod 34:29–30). For the rest of his life, he must wear a veil whenever he is among the people (34:34).[2]

Eventually, the cloud of glory will rest in the tabernacle (Exod 40:34). When the Temple of Solomon is consecrated, the cloud appears again, filling the place so that no one inside can stay on their feet (1 Kgs 8:10–11).

After the people are exiled, God's glory gets wheels. The temple has been destroyed, but this does not limit the presence of the Lord. Now the glory makes an unexpected move, appearing to the prophet Ezekiel in faraway Babylon (Ezek 1:3). Unlike the gods of the nations, the Lord does not dwell in a house made by hands (Isa 66:1), nor does he have a single territory where he reigns. He is the God of heaven and earth (Gen 24:3); indeed, all of heaven and earth are filled with his glory (Isa 6:3). Ezekiel sees a vision of four living creatures with wheels covered in eyes, whose sound is like the sound of armies. Over the frightening heavenly chariot is a throne, and seated on it is a likeness in human appearance with fire and brightness all around (Ezek 1:15–26). "Such was the appearance of the image of the glory of the Lord," says Ezekiel, "And when I saw it, I fell on my face … " (v. 28).

Glory in the New Testament

Then we come to the New Testament. John's Gospel begins with the astonishing claim that God's glory *took on flesh* and that *we have seen it*—"glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (1:14). The glory which no human being can behold and live has been seen in a human being: Jesus, Mary's son from Galilee.[3] He is the image of the

2 This links with the concept of "face," connected with glory and honor in many cultures. See Flanders, *About Face.* Relatedly, "Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed" (Ps 34:5).

3 In the New Testament, glory—or *doxa* in Greek—has many of the same meanings as in the Old Testament; however, it also adds some special emphases. The first emphasis is eschatological. In the New Testament, glory is frequently associated with the fuller revelation of Jesus Christ at the end of the age. So, for instance, in the Synoptic Gospels, the second coming of Jesus is referred to as "when the Son of Man comes in his glory" (Matt 25:31; Luke 9:26; Mark 10:30). This represents a time when he will be seen fully for who he is and will establish his rule and reign on earth.

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invisible God (Col 1:15), the radiance of the glory of God, and the exact imprint of his nature (Heb 1:3).

It's easy to see how these claims could have amazed and scandalized a faithful Jew. But John's Gospel takes things further. On the eve of his passion, Jesus makes his final prayer to the Father. He says:

> The glory that you have given to me, I have given to them, that they may be one, even as you and I are one, I in you and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. (John 17:22–23)

The glory that Jesus received from the Father has been given to us so that *we would be one* even as Jesus and the Father are one, and so that Jesus's true nature may be seen by the world. While there is a sense in which we "give glory to God" or "glorify" him, it is perhaps better to say that we need God to share his glory *with us* so that we can fulfill our purpose in becoming like him.

Remembering Moses, Paul says that now, "we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed *into the same image* from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:17–18). Peter adds that we ourselves have become partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4).

As we behold the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image—the image of our Creator, which he gave us from the beginning. While the image was marred through sin, Jesus comes to restore it to us.

At this time, "what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). To truly behold the glory of God in Christ is to be radically transformed into the same.

The fourth-century theologian Gregory of Nyssa connected John 17:22 and Ephesians 2 in his commentary on the Song of Songs. He writes:

> He who invested himself with humanity received this glory before the cosmos existed, and when that humanity had been glorified by the Spirit, the further gift of the Spirit's glory was passed on to the entire heredity [of that humanity], beginning with the disciples. That is why he said, "The glory that you have given me, I have given to them, so that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one." Therefore, the person who has left immaturity behind, and by growing attained to mature manhood, and achieved the measure of the intelligible stature, who from being a slave and a concubine has come to share the status of kingship.[4]

4 Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, 495–97.

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