

How to See Glory

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Date: 24 August 2025

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[0 : 0 0] When I was growing up, you may not know this about me, but I was really into astronomy.! It was a hobby of mine. I was just fascinated by the stars and the planets and everything up in the night sky.

And as a late teenager, I got a Newtonian telescope. I love this because I could spend hours outside in the backyard at night looking up at the stars and just finding the planets and seeing the planets.

And this telescope was powerful enough that I could make out the planets, I could make out the rings of Saturn, I could see the little moons of Jupiter orbiting. It was fascinating. I could look at far away nebula and star clusters.

And I would just spend hours there. There was something magical about that. And I'm sure you can relate if you've ever spent a night just looking up at the stars. There's something magical and otherworldly about being able to look up at the vastness of space, reach out from Earth and experience just a bit of the majesty of what's out there.

And it is just a bit, by the way. It's just a tiny bit. What we see out there in the night sky, even if you go out where there's no city lights and you look up at the night sky and you see all those stars, everything that's out there, do you know that you are only seeing 0.0005% of the stars that are just in our galaxy?

[1 : 3 6] Okay. For every one star you see in a full night sky, there are another 20 million stars that you're not seeing in our galaxy alone.

And there are 2 trillion other galaxies beyond our own galaxy out there. There's so much beyond what we can see.

And just learning about this, learning about what's out there when I was growing up, I was awed. I was awed by space and by just the majesty of the vastness of it, just what was out there.

But at the same time, I was also growing as a Christian. I was coming to understand the Bible. And as I grew as a Christian, what I realized is that it wasn't the stars or the galaxies that were making me feel that way.

But it was the God behind them. The God who made them. I was actually, without realizing it, I was reaching out to Him.

[2 : 4 8] I was reaching out for God's glory by looking at what He had made. And it's what Psalm 19 says. We heard it at the beginning of our service. It starts, Psalm 19 verse 1, The heavens declare the glory of God.

And not just the heavens, but all of creation. All that we reach out to. And we all reach out to experience the world around us, don't we? To enjoy the world around us and the things that are in it.

And everything in creation that we reach out to and enjoy in our world, whether it's traveling to see new places, going on holidays, enjoying nature, seeing what's out there, even browsing the internet to see what's out in the world.

All of that, you know what it is? Actually, it is us wanting to grab hold of something beyond ourselves. It is actually us wanting to grab hold of glory. And whether you realize it or not, that's what your heart longs for.

God's glory. In fact, God's glory is actually the deepest longing of the heart of a created human being, is to experience the glory of our Creator.

[4 : 06] And we look around in this world and we reach out for it. We want that. We want to touch what's behind it all. The deepest longing of the human heart is the glory of God.

Well, today as we look at this passage, we're going to discover that we don't have to travel the world. We don't have to stare into space to experience glory.

It's actually much closer than we think. But it's also very easy to miss. Verse 1 of our passage.

It starts like this. After six days, Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

Why? Why are they going up a mountain? Did Jesus just want to have a hike and maybe he thought Peter, James, and John were a bit unfit and they needed the training?

[5 : 13] Why them? Why are they going up a mountain? Well, in that culture, mountains were very significant. Because mountains are where you go to meet with God.

But actually, it wasn't just in that culture. Throughout cultures, even today, there's a sense that to meet with God, you've got to go up. You've got to go higher than just the world we live in.

Right? I was on doing a hike just above Boys Drive once. And I turned a corner around one of the copies and I came across probably about 50 people in white robes.

Up on the mountain, they're just worshipping, having a worship service. You thought, you know, it was inconvenient coming to church here on a Sunday. Imagine having to go up the mountain every Sunday.

But there are certain religious groups that feel that they've got to go up the mountain and there they'll be closer to God. They'll meet with God. And actually, it's something that we see in the Bible.

[6 : 19] Mountains are very significant in the Bible. In the Old Testament, that's where the saints often met with God. Moses met with God on a mountain, Mount Sinai.

We read earlier. Elijah, that great, powerful prophet, met with God. God on a mountain. I wonder if you were paying attention to the readings earlier.

We read from Exodus 24 and we read this story from Matthew. Did you see the connections between them? Moses goes up the mountain. He takes three named men with him. Okay, there's others, but three of them are named.

Interesting. Jesus goes up the mountain. Three named men. Moses takes his brother Aaron. Interesting. It's pointed out here that James and John are brothers. There's a lot of connections.

There's a mention of six days as well. There's these textual connections between what's going on here and what's happened in Exodus 24 already in the Old Testament. They're going up to experience God's glory.

[7 : 19] That's what it seems that Jesus is doing. Taking his disciples up for a similar reason. To experience the glory of God. And that's probably, being Jews, knowing what mountains were, that's probably what they were going up expecting.

Their hearts were expectant. They were excited about what was going to happen. They were going to somehow experience the glory of God. But I don't think they were expecting what happened next.

Verse 2. There, they got to the top of the mountain now. There he, Jesus, was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun.

And his clothes became as white as the light. Wow. Just picture that in your mind's eye for a second.

Okay? Have you recently stared up at the sun? Well, you can't, can you? It's too bright. But for the record, I don't recommend that.

[8 : 29] It'll damage your eyes to stare up at the sun. It's so bright. And it's just one of the, you know, smaller stars of our galaxy. But it's raw power.

You know, the sun is millions of nuclear explosions happening every second. That's what gives us the power and energy even so far away in space that we receive on earth.

The sun is this raw power. And here, Jesus' face is shining with this raw power. And his clothes became as white as the light.

Okay, no washing detergent is going to boast to make your clothes as white as the light. You know, they wouldn't boast that because they can't do that.

But this is what, just picture, I want you to picture Jesus as he's presented here in your mind's eye just for a second. His face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light.

[9 : 34] What's happening? What's happening here? Well, this is the way the Old Testament describes God.

Let me read to you some verses of visions that prophets got of God when he allowed them to see just a little bit of his glory.

Daniel 7 verse 9. Daniel sees, And the Ancient of Days took his seat, and his clothing was as white as snow. Psalm 104 verse 2. The Lord wraps himself in light as with a garment.

Daniel 10 verse 6. Daniel sees the vision of the Lord. His face was like lightning. His eyes like flaming torches. This is a description of God's glory that the prophets have seen in snatches throughout the Old Testament.

And here, they're seeing it in Jesus. Verse 3. Just then, there appeared before him Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus.

[10 : 44] Very strange what's going on here. Well, these are the two men. Moses and Elijah are the two men who met with God on a mountain. And now they're talking to Jesus like they recognize him.

Do you get it yet? Do you see what's going on here? Are you getting this? Well, apparently Peter is still not getting it. Verse 4.

Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters. One for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

Peter, as if he's saying, while we wait for God to show up. Okay? One of the other gospel writers say, Peter did not know what he was talking about.

And you see, he's not getting it yet. And so to make it clear, God does show up the way that they expected, but only to direct their attention back to Jesus.

[11 : 53] Jesus, from verse 5. While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them. And a voice from the cloud said, This is my son, whom I love.

With him I am well pleased. Listen to him. When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them.

Get up, he said. Don't be afraid. When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. Everything was back to normal.

But do you get it? Do you get it now? Do you get what's happening here at this momentous event? The transfiguration? Do you get what it's about? You need to get this.

These men went up the mountain to reach out and to experience the glory of God.

[13 : 01] But when they were there, they discovered that it had been with them all along. Hidden in this man right next to them. Jesus.

This event here was meant to show them and us thousands of years later, that all the glory of God, all the glory behind the cosmos that made the heavens, that made the two trillion and counting galaxies, full of billions of stars that are out there, with raw power, all of the glory of everything we see in creation, that is behind it all, the glory of God, all of that, that our hearts, all of our hearts yearn for, that glory of God that our hearts yearn for, is already here in this man, Jesus.

It is all inside him, but it's hidden. But in this moment, they started to see Jesus as he really is.

But it's hidden. It was hidden for them. Why? Why was it hidden? Why can't God just show us his glory?

Why is it hidden like this? Well, I'll tell you why. Because if God showed us his glory, it would kill us.

[14 : 35] Exodus 33, verse 20, God says to Moses on the mountain, who's experiencing his glory, but not in its full yet, God says, you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.

And God's not, that's not a vain threat. God's trying to protect Moses. God protects us, by not showing us his glory, in its full, because of how dangerous it is, for us to see it.

And the Israelites knew this. The Israelites realized, that God's glory was dangerous. When they had just experienced, just a little bit of it, they said, in Exodus 20, so, it says, when the people saw the thunder, and lightning, and heard the trumpet, and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear, they stayed at a distance, and said to Moses, speak to us yourself, and we will listen, but do not have God speak to us, or we will die.

At Deuteronomy 18, Moses later says to them, the Lord your God, will raise up for you, a prophet like me, from among you. He's talking about, way into the future, of where they were now.

The God will raise up a prophet, from among you, from your fellow Israelites, you must listen to him, for this is what you asked, of the Lord your God, at Horeb, on the day of the assembly, when you said, let us not hear the voice, of the Lord our God, nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.

[16 : 10] So you see what's happening, Moses is saying, listen you were right to ask, that you don't see God, but he is still going to send you, someone, a way that you can experience his glory, if you listen to him, and here on the mountain, thousands of years later, they're seeing Jesus in glory, and there's a voice that says, listen to him.

This is the one, who Moses was talking about. Jesus, this man, that came here, and lived, and walked around, in our world, 2000 years ago, that man, is the way, you get to meet with God.

Jesus is the way, you get to experience, the glory of God, without dying. But, to do that, you need to do, the thing that God said, you need to do, in verse 5.

listen to him. That's how we experience, the glory of God. Interesting, isn't it? We think, the way we will experience glory, is seeing things, because we're very visual people, that we, just like here, if we see, if we see, flaming fire, if we see, these things, if we see, what the, the Israelites saw, on Mount Sinai, if we see, the stars, and see space, and see the waterfalls, that's how we experience, God's glory, but, here he says, no, the way that you will, truly experience, the glory behind, all those things, is through, our ears, it's through listening, particularly, to Jesus.

That's how, you will experience, the glory of God, without dying, by listening to him. Now this is where, most religions, even many brands, of Christianity, get it wrong.

[18 : 09] What is religion? What is religion? Especially today, well I'll tell you, what religion is today, and in a sense, has always been, religion is the business, of taking people, up the mountain.

All the different religions, they are all in the same business, of taking people, up the mountain, giving people, some experience, of God, up on the top, of the mountain, that raises them, above, their mere, humdrum, lives on earth.

Because that's actually, what every human heart wants, every human heart, wants to climb the mountain. We all want, somehow to climb the mountain, we just don't know how. And religion, all the different religions, that are out there, try to be our guide, up the mountain.

And create these, God experiences, these divine experiences for us. Whether it's, you know, the majesty, of an ancient cathedral, and the, the voices of the, the choir.

Or whether it's the robes, and incense, of the Catholic mass, that creates that, outwardly, ethereal experience, for us. Or whether it's the purity, of the prayers, in the mosque.

[19 : 24] Or whether it's, the transcendent, escape of Buddhism. Or the emotional, high of, the music and lights, of the mega church. There are all different ways, to try get up the mountain.

And to try, experience the divine. Everybody's trying to get, this mountaintop experience, of the divine. Whether they know it or not. Even non-religious people, are also trying to get, their mountaintop experiences.

Aren't they? In the holidays they go on, in the traveling people do, in the music that, they pursue, and, and the, the art. All of that, is actually, all of the ways, that we reach out, into the world, to, to reach out of our, our lives, and try to, touch something that's, bigger and, and that matters.

That, that's all of us, trying to, trying to get to the top, of the mountain, and experience God's glory. When all along, we've had it right here, in Jesus.

2 Corinthians 4, verse 6, Paul writes, for God, who said, let light shine, out of darkness, made his light, shine in our hearts, to give us, the light, of the knowledge, of God's glory, displayed, in the face, of Christ.

[20 : 49] God's glory. Jesus, is the way, God has made, for you, to experience, his glory, more than, anywhere else, in creation, more than, anywhere else, more than, anywhere you can go, anything you can see, the way, God has appointed, for you, to, to touch, to reach out, and experience, his glory, glory, is through, this man, Jesus.

God's glory, that's how, you find it. That word, glory, is a very interesting, word, in scripture, the original word, you know what it means? It means, weightiness.

That's the literal, meaning, of the word glory, weightiness, or, to put it, a different way, something, that matters.

Glory, is what matters. Glory, is what matters, in life. There are some things, that matter, in this life, and there are some things, that don't matter, and some things, that matter, more than others.

I might be stoned, for saying this, but rugby, doesn't matter. Okay? It matters a little bit more, in South Africa, than in every other country, but, in the grand scheme, of things, the things, that we are obsessed with, the things, that we're thinking about, the things, that we're chasing after, most of them, don't matter, at the end of the day.

[22 : 27] What matters, is the glory of God, and we find that, and we connect, with what matters, through, Jesus Christ.

Jesus came, to connect us, with the glory of God, to connect us, with what really matters, in this world. And so, how do we, do that?

How do we connect, with God's glory, through Jesus Christ? How do you, connect with, that glory, and what matters, through, Jesus Christ? Well, God told you here, he says, listen to him.

That's how you connect, with the glory of God, by listening, to him, the words, and the truths, that Jesus brought, from heaven to earth, and entrusted, with his disciples, that are here, the words of the apostles, and the words, of the prophets, this, is how, we get to experience, God's glory, this.

It's, it seems crazy, that the, the way, to experience, God's glory, is through a book, through words, on a page, but these are not, just any words, on a page, this is, the words, that Jesus brought, from heaven to earth, these are the, these are the things, that matter, more than anything else, this is how, we connect, with the glory, of God, and how we experience, the glory of God, Peter, who was there, on the mountain, later on, he writes a letter, okay, he writes two, that we got in the Bible, one and two, Peter, but I want, to read to you, what he said, in 2 Peter, chapter one, you can turn there, in your Bibles, if you want to, you can just listen, 2 Peter one, from verse 16, this is Peter, recounting, his experience, there on the mountain, and he says this, for we did not, follow cleverly, devised stories, when we told you, about the coming, of our Lord Jesus Christ, in power, but we were eyewitnesses, of his majesty, he received, honor and glory, from God the Father, when the voice, came to him, from the majestic, glory, saying, this is my son, whom I love, and with him,

[24 : 41] I am well pleased, we ourselves, heard this voice, that came from heaven, when we were with him, on the sacred mountain, we also have, the prophetic message, as something, completely reliable, and you will do well, to pay attention to it, as to a light, shining in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the morning star, rises in your hearts, you see, what Peter is saying there, he's saying that, until, the dawn of God's glory, comes in its fullness, on this earth, this word, is how you will experience him now, when you pay attention, to it, this is how you will experience, the glory of God, before it comes, and covers this earth, fully one day, this is how you will experience, that glory, this is how you will experience, and find out what matters, and this is how you will find, the thing that your heart, yearns for above all other things, here, when you pay attention to this, so are you doing that, maybe you're still yearning, for the mountaintop experience, maybe that's what's brought you, to church, today, well let me tell you, it's right here, in this,

Bible, if you learn to truly, listen, to what it's saying, but it's so easy, for these words, to be crowded out, by all the other words, in our lives, and in this world, isn't it, these words here, the things that really matter, can so easily, get crowded out, in our lives, how many words, do you hear, each day, do you think, well a study was done, and it's estimated, that you hear, 20 to 30,000 words, every day, from media, from internet, from radio, from other people around you, from news, everything that's going on around you, we hear so many words, 20 to 30,000 per day, words that you are hearing, let me ask you, how many of those, are his words, how many of the words, you hear, are words from Jesus, are words that he has brought, from heaven, the things that actually matter, you see it's quite, shocking when we think about it, how many of the words, we hear every day, don't actually matter, and how few of the words, we hear are the ones, that matter, we need today, when there are words, flying around, when there's media, when there's so much information, that we're being bombarded with, every day, we need more than ever, to do what God is saying here, and listen to him, listen to these words, and every day, we need to get into the habit, of shutting off the other words, and opening this, and finding out, what really matters, because this is where we find, the glory of God, that our hearts are longing for, here, and this is how we need, to meet him, now, if we're ever going to be ready, to meet him when he comes again, and that's also what this event, this transfiguration on the mountain, is about, it's not just about,

God's glory, that is hidden, being shown, it is also, about God's glory, that is coming, in the future, this transfiguration, is pointing forward, how do we know that, well, do you remember, how last week's passage ended, we didn't actually, we didn't actually get, into the very last verse, of last week's passage, but I want to read it, to you again, so the last thing, Jesus said, in the previous story, was this, it's chapter 16, verse 27 to 28, he said, for the son of man, is going to come, in his father's glory, with his angels, and then he will reward, each person, according to what they have done, and then he said, truly I tell you, some who are standing here, will not taste death, before they see, the son of man, coming in his kingdom, what, what does that mean, so verse 27, we know what he's talking, about there, right, the son of man, is coming in his father's glory, with his angels, he's talking about, his return, in glory, to this earth, and it's spoken about, a lot, in the Bible,

Jesus is going to come back, in glory, at the ascension, the disciples were staring up, he was ascended to heaven, and the angels came, and they said, why are you staring up into space, he's coming back, the same way, that you saw him go, Jesus is coming back, that is a certainty, and he's going to come back, in glory, not in humility, the way he first came, he's going to come back, in glory, like the disciples, are seeing him, on that mountain, and he is going to bring, God's righteous judgment, to earth, and he's going to put, all wrongs, to right, and he's going to remove, sin and evil, and death, and he's going to begin, a glorious new creation, that will never end, that's what he's talking about here, but then he says, something weird, truly I tell you, some who are standing here, will not taste death, before they see, the son of man, coming in his kingdom, they will, he's saying, it's not some cryptic thing, it's very simple, what he's saying, he's saying, some of the people there, will, see, him, coming, before, they die, now, how can that be, because, they're all dead, and, as far as we know, like we don't think, you know,

Peter, James, and John, are still hiding out in a cave, 2000 years old, they're, they died, in fact, we have records of their death, and yet he hasn't come back yet, so what, what did, why was he saying this, what does he mean, well, what he means, you see, is, they will see him, as he will be, when he comes back, they will see him, as the judge, they will see him, as he really is, in his kingdom, before they die, only some of them, and then what happens next, he takes some of them, up the mountain, and that's exactly what they see, that's what he was talking about, yeah, if you were ever wondering, what verse 28, means, it's explained, by the very next, passage, okay, context, it's very important, so in other words, what we're seeing, on the mountain, Jesus, in his glory, with this, shining like the sun, and clothes as white as light, seeing him, in his, post resurrection, glory, is a preview, of what's coming, in the future, for our world, it's kind of like, a movie preview, you know, if there's a movie, coming out, that you've wanted to watch, what they will do, is that they will release, a preview, a few months, before the movie comes out, so that you can know, what the movie is going to be about, and you get a sense, of, the movie, before it's released, to make you anticipate, watching it, even better, is when you get, an exclusive preview,

[32 : 16] I don't know, if you've ever, had the opportunity, to get an exclusive preview, of a movie, and that means, that not everyone, can have it, only, select people, can, can come see, a bit of this movie, before anyone else, gets to see it, well that's, what's going on here, Jesus is giving, his disciples, an exclusive, preview, a private viewing, of what will one day, be revealed in public, okay, they are, what they are seeing, on the mountain, what they saw that day, on that mountain, the whole world, will see one day, what the disciples, saw on that mountain, you will see, with your eyes, you will see this, what they saw, are you ready, to see that, are you ready, for that day, when you see Jesus, in his glory, as he truly is, well you can only, be ready, to see, and survive, the glorious Jesus, at his second coming, if you listen to him, at his first coming, when his glory was hidden, when you paid attention, to his words, that's how you can be ready, to see him, when he comes again, if you listen to him, the first time, and the same goes, for your friends, they will also see, what the disciples saw, at the top of that mountain, everyone will, your friends, you know, family members maybe, work colleagues, who have no interest, in Jesus, no interest in your, religion, in your faith, who don't see, any glory, anything important, anything that matters, in Jesus, they've got other things, that they, they worry about, other things that matter, for them, they don't see any glory, in Jesus, let me tell you, they will one day, they will see his glory, they will see, what the disciples saw, and as the Bible says, every knee will bow, and every tongue, will confess, because everybody, will one day, see who Jesus really is, and in the meantime, they need you, to help them, to see his glory, before that day, so how are you helping, your friends, see the glory of Jesus, how are you helping, them to see, what really matters, in this world, well there's only one way, you can, by bringing his words, to them, because we see the glory, through listening, to him, helping them, to listen to, this, because this, is where they will meet,

God, in Jesus, in a way that they can survive, and come to be saved, before they meet him, in judgment, they need, to listen to this, and so how are you praying, how are you thinking, of ways, that you can, offer to read, some of the Bible, with them, how are you sharing, with them, the things that you're reading, in the Bible, how are you thinking, and planning, how you can invite them, to serve us as a church, so that they can listen to this, this is the way, the only way, that they will find out, what matters, and see the glory of Jesus, before they see it, on that day, so that they can be ready, for that day, how are you actually, planning, to help them, to see that, are you bringing, this word to them, are you sharing, these truths, with them, I guess the question, the bigger question is, can they see, can the people outside, the other people in your life, see that Jesus, is glorious, in your life, that he matters to you, can they see that, because you know, whenever, well, especially Moses, when he saw, just a little bit, of the glory of God, he came down that mountain, and his face was glowing, people could see, that he had seen God, can, your people see, that you have seen God, in Jesus, is that glowing out of you, are you excited, about Jesus, because if you are excited, about Jesus, which you will be, if you've actually seen him, well then they'll see that, and they'll want to know, why, this matters to you, and that is, that is what this story, if we, if we get it inside us, what's happening here, on this mountain, that's what, it should result in, it should result in, you being excited, about Jesus, reading this, picturing his glory, realizing that, it is the glory, behind everything, in creation, should make you, excited about this man,

Jesus, and all the words, of scripture, all the words in here, that's what their purpose is, everything in here, is meant to make you, excited about Jesus, it's meant to, help you to see Jesus, everything here, it's all about him, and it's all, here to, help you to see him, and make you realize, that all the glory of God, that your heart yearns for, is found in this man, and therefore, he is, the thing that matters most, in this world, and he is more important, and more thrilling, than any other pursuit, in this world, have you, seen that yet, have you realized that, have you seen his glory, I pray that you will, let's pray, let's pray, Lord, we, we pray, would you help us, to see Jesus, would you help us, to see his glory, as those disciples, saw on that mountain, just a glimmer, and as they saw Jesus, in truth, would you help us, to do the same Lord, would you help us, to see Jesus, as he really is, and would seeing him Lord, transform us, and shine out of us, so that through us, others can see him too, in Jesus name,

Amen, we're going to spend some time, now celebrating communion, in Jesus name,