

“The Heart of Worship: Glory” (Week 3)
(Rev. 7:9-12)

- **The Study of Awe**

- In the book of *Revelation*, at the end of the Bible, John has a *wild* vision where he glimpses the realities of heaven—what is and is to come. And one of the things John sees is *worship*, the worship of heaven: **“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: ‘Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!’” (7:9-12)**
 - The angels, the creatures, the elders use 7 different words in their worship—but the key word that summarizes them all is *glory*—*glory to God!* That’s what they’re doing in heaven—*beholding God’s glory* and *giving God glory*. And that’s basically what we’re supposed to do here on earth. *Glory* is the heart of worship. So, today, we’re going to think about two basic questions: **What is God’s glory?** And **How do we live for God’s glory?**
- To enter into this concept of *glory*, I want you to think about another word first. The word is: *awe*. *Awe* is our natural response when we *encounter glory*. Recently, psychologists began to realize that *awe* is such a core part of human experience that it deserves to be studied. So, get this, they actually created social-scientific experiments to better understand *awe*. How would you even begin to do that?
- One research group put people in *beautiful places*: a majestic view from a mountain overlook, a scenic grove of trees, an immersive art installation—all meant to evoke *awe* and then observe the measurable impacts. They discovered that *awe* offers a surprising amount of “pro-social benefits.” Sam Jolman writes: **“People who experience more awe in their lives are happier, more generous, more helpful, more cooperative, more ethical, and more humble. So powerful is the impact of awe that even a single minute of standing in a grove of towering trees can lead people to become measurably more helpful and ethical. Researchers concluded: ‘Awe imbues people with a different sense of themselves. One that is small, more humble, and part of something larger. Awe by nature calls us up and out of ourselves, encouraging us to be available for the world around us. It does this by making us feel that we’re a part of life’s grandeur, belonging to something beautiful and good in the world...people have some sense of their personal concerns being lesser...Awe produces both reverence and belonging...Yet, most people live awe-deprived lives, busy, often indoors, rarely getting lost in the wider, wonderful world.’” (Sam Jolman)**
 - When we experience something *glorious*, our natural response is *awe*: it’s a mixture of *wonder*, *fear*, and *delight*. It’s being *astonished* by something and yet *irresistibly drawn to it*. We naturally want to *praise* things that produce *awe*. What is the place that you think of when you think of something *glorious* that fills you with *awe*?
 - I think of Raystown Lake, right in the heart of Pennsylvania, where we visit my in-laws every year. When you’re driving in, you come up to this magnificent overlook where the trees break, the sky opens up above and the water stretches across the valley below. There’s a path, and a bench, and this has become my little heaven on earth where I go on a run and sit with God in His glory every time we visit (**Pictures**).
 - Science has proven that the *awe* we experience from *glorious things* actually makes us *better people*.
- Now, can see how this connects with worship? When God calls us to seek His glory and give Him glory in worship, it’s not just because *it’s the right thing to do*, but it’s also *for our good!* This is why C.S. Lewis said: **“In commanding us to worship Him, God is inviting us to enjoy**

him.” The Westminster Catechism says: “*The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.*” When humanity is at it’s best, living on-purpose, *it’s a life of worship, a life of glory.*

• God’s Glory

- Just like our previous words, *Holiness* and *Presence*, *Glory* is another *major theme* in Scripture that you can trace through the *entire Bible*. And with this theme, we’re going to start shifting in our series to understand the *practical impact* that worship has in our lives. So, *what is the glory of God* and *what does it mean for us to glorify God?* Take a look at some of the big examples:
 - In Exodus, **“The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from within the cloud. To the Israelites, the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.”** (Ex. 24:16-17) The Psalms are full of God’s glory: **“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”** (Ps. 19:1) And remember what the angels were saying in Isaiah’s vision? **“And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’”** (Isa. 6:3)
 - The New Testament keeps it going: John says, **“The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son…”** (John 1:14) In Luke 9, some of the disciples saw that glory on the Mountain of Jesus’ Transfiguration. Mary said, **“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my savior.”** (Luke 1:46-47) Jesus’ said our good works cause people to *glorify* God. Paul said, **“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”** (1 Cor. 10:31)
- You can probably think of *many other* “glory sightings” in the Bible, and in your life. But what does the Bible *mean* by the *glory* of God? The O.T. word for “glory” is *Kavod*. It literally means “weighty or heavy.” When the O.T. talks about someone who is *heavy* it says *they “have kavod.”* But figuratively, it means *someone’s wealth, significance, reputation, or glory.*
 - We do this in English too: something is *heavy, weighty, important*, we feel the *gravity* of a situation, someone has a certain *gravitas* about them. If you’ve ever met someone really “important,” you feel nervous and intimidated because you’re in the presence of their *kavod*, their *glory*. Naturally, God’s *glory* is the *weightiest of all!*
 - The N.T. word for “glory” is *Doxa*, it means *dignity, honor, praise, inherent worth*—it’s where we get the word “doxology.”
- So, when the Bible talks about *God’s glory* it’s talking about His surpassingly great intrinsic worth, and about the majestic splendor that shows up when His holy presence becomes manifest to us. Most often when God’s glorious presence shows up in a tangible way in the Bible, it’s a “glory cloud” of radiant light, and sometimes even earthquakes, thunder, and fire.
 - At the same time, humans as image bearers of God, along with all creation, also *give* glory to God—we *reflect* and *represent* and *magnify* His glory. Simply because you bear the image of the Glorious God, and because you’re part of His glorious creation—you *can glorify God in everything you do!* It’s not just singing in a service, right?

• Reflecting the Glory

- But all of this *does* come together when we worship—whenever, wherever, however we worship. Worship is about *experiencing God’s glory* and *giving God glory*. Worship puts us in touch with who we really are and why everything exists.
- And worship really does have a transformative and practical outflow in our lives. Because, the truth is this: **We become like what we worship.** Or in other words, **We become what we behold.** That person or thing we value most, love most, delight in most—that is what is ultimately going to *define* us most.
 - In the negative sense, this is why the Bible is so adamantly against idolatry—because if we worship what is false, we become false. **“The idols of the nations are silver and gold, made by human hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see. They have ears, but cannot hear, nor is there breath in their mouths. Those who make them will become like them, and so will all who trust in them.”** (Ps. 135:15-18)

- Consider those who place the most *weight* in the age-old vices of humankind—those who’s *glory* is the idol of money, or sex, or power. What becomes of someone like that? *You get it?*
- But the converse is also true, when we live in the worship of what is good and beautiful and true—when we worship and fear God above all. This is what happens in our journey with Christ. **“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” (2 Cor. 3:8)** *You get it?*
- You and I were made for worship, because we were made for glory. We were made to enjoy all that is good and glorious, even God Himself. And we were made to reflect and live for God’s glory. John Piper said, *“The goal of my life should be to so live that when people know me well enough they would say, ‘God is glorious!’”*
- Here’s what this means for us: **When worship goes from an event we attend to a lifestyle we live, we become people who behold God’s glory, reflect God’s glory, and live for God’s glory.** This is our purpose and our joy! *Behold God’s glory, reflect God’s glory, live for God’s glory.*
- My question for you is: *What are you beholding? What are you reflecting? What are you living for?* What would it look like to embrace a lifestyle of *beholding God’s glory, reflecting God’s glory, and living for God’s glory in everything we do?* This is what following Jesus is about and this is *the heart of worship.*
- What’s so cool is, even in this frustrating disruption of not being able to be together in-person for this day of worship, God is giving us the opportunity to reconnect with the heart of worship: because we can *enjoy and glory God* even and especially when *no one else is in the room!*
- When *the only thing* it’s about *is His presence.* We get to do that right now. Let’s worship Him! And let’s make it our lifestyle all week long.