

Pitch Black

He wasn't a coward but he had to admit that the circumstances were...well, threatening. As he climbed up the hill before him, along with his company, he could hardly make out the rocks on the ground. Looking up though, he could see a faint light radiating from somewhere on the other side.

Days earlier, he and his friends had gathered at the meeting site because their town elders had said to go. Word had been carried throughout the four northern tribes who occupied the land that a big fight was coming, and he was not one to back away from it.

Curiously though, the 'big cheese' among them seemed bent on making it an unusual battle, to say the least. You see, first there had been about 32,000 assembled for war but most had been yella' – you know, chicken-hearted – and so when they were given the opportunity, they hustled back home. Well, that left only 10,000 to fight the massive army camped just north of them.

But then, for some strange reason, their leader had sent all but 300 to their tents. 'Man alive!' he thought, 'The guy must be losing it'. Nevertheless, he'd come to fight and he believed God was with them.

Now, in the thick of the night, it was the beginning of the second watch and they'd reached the top of the hill. Looking down upon the enemy host, he saw for the first

time their numbers. They were strewn out as far as he could see – their campfires were dieing down, but there were thousands of them! *All the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.* Now, he was...scared.

You know, "glory" is probably one of the most misused words of Christianese. If you were to query 100 people as to its meaning, you'd get dozens of different answers. Even many sermonizers have contorted or blurred its meaning to fit their messages.

Fundamentally, there are two basics meanings to the several New Testament words generally translated as glory in the Bible – first, a brilliant light or splendor and second, a boasting. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God is acclaimed in the heavenly realm as worthy of glory (see Rev 5:12), but that's because those in heaven understand what they're saying and why. It's not some mechanical pronouncement or rote rite – rather, it's an explosion of response to His character and deeds.

Is there more we can know about glory, specifically God's glory? Let's see.

In the Old Testament, the word for glory is pronounced something like 'kabad' and means something weighty or of substance. The first time we learn of this glory is with the children of Israel as they began their wilderness journey. It

is not the first mention of the word but its first use in connection with the Almighty. At this point, the people were murmuring against Moses and even wishing they were back in Egypt. *"Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, 'At evening you shall know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt. And in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD.'" ... Then Moses spoke to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel, 'Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your complaints.'" Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.*

What an awe inspiring sight! And this was the point, really. God knew it was not simply enough to answer them, to respond to their complaints or to provide the miraculous manna. The people needed to be awed, overwhelmed with a sense of Who they were complaining against. When you think about it, it grabs your attention for neither Noah nor Abraham, neither Isaac nor Jacob, not even Joseph beheld the glory of the Lord. But these grumblers did.

Later, Moses may have needed some awe as well. *Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain. Now the glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the*

seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. The sight of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel.

Moses wanted to see this glory up close. *And he said, "Please, show me Your **glory**." Then He said, "I will make all My **goodness** pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. "So it shall be, while My **glory** passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. "Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."*

So immediately, we learn that God's glory produces awe and that it is directly linked with His goodness. I love the fact that the first mention of this goodness (Gen 24:10) is when the nameless servant of Abraham took it with him to find the bride for Isaac and it was bestowed upon the bride – many of you recognize this as the awesome picture of the Holy Spirit being sent by the Father to get the bride for His Son, Jesus. This goodness has indeed been bestowed upon us who believe – the church. But back to Moses...

Nearly fifteen hundred years later, on another mountain, a portion of this same glory was manifested. And again Moses was there, along with Elijah, Peter, James and John. *Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. **His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.** And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."*

*While he was still speaking, behold, a **bright cloud** overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. (see also Luke 9:32)*

Clearly, there is more to glory than 'meets the eye'. There's some spiritual dynamic at work therein. Even from a distance, this weighty brilliance invades and impresses upon the soul an overwhelming sense of either joyful or fearful awe. That's because God's glory is a part of

Who He is. It's not created by God but inherent to Him.

Now, the Jews in Egypt had seen many miraculous signs in the course of their deliverance, but they still needed to see God's glory. The disciples had seen many miraculous signs in the course of following the 'Prophet who was like unto Moses' – Jesus, but they still apparently needed to see the glory. In following God's leading, both were leaving old worlds behind them and venturing into the unknown.

And speaking of new worlds, there's one coming for you and I called the Millennium – the 1000 year rule of Jesus Christ on earth. Leading up to that, during the soon coming seven year period of tribulation, Isaiah prophesied of the Jewish remnant: (Isa 60:1,2) *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.*

While pertaining to the conclusion of the tribulation time, Jesus said, (Mat 25:31) *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And, Isaiah said of the same time, (Isa 40:5) And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see [it] together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken [it].*

Then, the ultimate wonderful future we look forward to is

spoken of in the book of Habbakuk where we read, (Hab 2:14) *For the earth shall be **filled with the knowledge** (experiential) of the **glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.** (also Psa 72:19 and Isa 6:3)*

So, we know that God's glory is an awe inspiring splendor that is an expression of Himself, specifically His goodness, and that our future will be filled with it upon earth, but there's more. Not only is it God's plan to reveal it to us and to fill the earth with it but also to make it a part of who we are in Him as well!

Specifically, Jesus prayed, (John 17:5,22) - *And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:*

Surprised? Maybe so, but realize that you've been prepared for it. Here's what Rom 9:23 says - *...that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had **prepared beforehand** for glory,*

Now, you may not think you're all that glorious. I sure don't. But, understand that for now, it is a work in progress. We've got to keep our eyes on the Lord so to speak. (2 Cor 3:18) - *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

But keeping Him in view isn't done simply from the comfort of

your comfort zone is it? The transformation process isn't painless or problem free. Most of you already know that, don't you? Back to the story we started with:

Orders were given and the meager host of 300 was split into three groups of a hundred. Each man was given a trumpet and a pitcher, that is, a clay pot. Inside each pot was a lamp.

Quietly, they all spread out on the hills surrounding the massive enemy camp below. Then, upon the command signal of their leader, Gideon, they all sounded their trumpets which were in their right hands and broke the clay pots in their left hands. In the pitch blackness of the night, their horns thundered and their now exposed lamps beamed brightly.

Thinking perhaps that they were surrounded by huge numbers of attackers, the enemy hosts below went into chaos. They began killing each other and then headed as fast as they could into retreat. At that point, all the men of Israel, many of whom were previously cowardly, gathered together and launched an assault on the Midianite army which was now weak and in complete disarray. The battle was won; the country was saved. (See Judges 7)

The 'glory' of those lamps had to shine for the enemy to be routed. In the darkness, the enemy was seemingly unbeatable by sheer numbers alone. But as soon as the light broke forth, that hoard was doomed to defeat. So it is

with us and the glory of God – the pot has got to be broken for the light to shine forth.

They used to say, “No guts, no glory.” That may be so, for it takes ‘guts’ in a spiritual sense to face the breaking of the pot. For us, glory comes from tribulation. The apostles had much to say about this. They wrote, *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* (2 Cor 4:17); *And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations...*(Rom 5:3); *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* (Rom 8:18); *But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.*(1 Pet 5:10); *So also [is] the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory:* (1 Cor 15:42,43)

So, where does this ‘guts’, this trust in God, come from? From keeping in mind, in sight, the **goodness** of God. It is in these times of trial that we need most to recall ‘God is **good**’. **As with Moses, to see His glory is to see His goodness.**

And finally, why is Jesus worthy of glory? Because, as ever, He led the way. After His resurrection, on the road to

Emmaus, Jesus told his disciples, *Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?*” (Luke 24:26) and the writer of Hebrews added, *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.* (Heb 2:9,10)

You see, Jesus Christ IS the glory of God. He IS the goodness that passed by Moses. He is the face of God, the goodness of God manifested. In heaven, we will know this absolutely as we worship Him, and in the heavenly city we will literally bask in Him. Speaking of this, the apostle John wrote of the New Jerusalem, *The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.* (Rev 21:23)

Is your pot being broken? Take courage, for in so doing God is bringing forth His glory in you. Stay your heart on what you know – **God is good** -- for one day soon we will all live eternally in the splendor of His glorious goodness and clay pots will be no more.