



The Life & Ministry of Jesus

Session 4 – In the Beginning

‘...the Word was God’ Visions of God in the Bible

INTRODUCTION

“The awesome glory of God the Father and Jesus Christ far exceed anything we can even imagine. Realizing this should lead us to a profound sense of wonder and humility!”

“Understanding the natural human reaction to such circumstances, God often encouraged His servants to not be afraid. ‘...Thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity...’” (Isaiah 57:15).

“In this ungodly, secular age many people—even professing Christians—seem to have lost sight of the divine majesty of God. Many behave with unrecognized shallowness and irreverence, lacking respect for our Creator. Sadly, it seems His name is uttered more often in profanity than in respect.”

“But what about all those who have glimpsed the majesty of God? How have they reacted? Scripture shows that their response has nearly always been one of *profound humility*. When the prophets of the First Testament scriptures and the apostles of the Second Testament experienced God, to a person they saw themselves as utterly inadequate and awe-struck with a godly fear and respect.” Would that happen to us too? (Bennet Dungan, *The Grandeur of Almighty God*)

Close Encounters of the Divine Kind

Job, one of the earliest persons to appear in scriptural text, became keenly aware of his own profound lack of understanding when God revealed to him some aspects of the magnificence of His (God’s) creation. (Job, chapters 38-41)

Job’s trembling reaction was immediate. “Then Job answered the Lord and said, ‘I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. I have uttered what I did not understand—[“I have spoken out of ignorance”]...Listen, please, and let me speak...I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but *now my eye sees You*. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes’” (**Job 42:1-6**).

Moses. When Moses first met with God at the burning bush, he “hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God” (Exodus 3:6). In **Joshua**’s encounter with the divine, he “fell on his face to the earth and worshipped, and said to Him, ‘What does my Lord say to His servant?’” (Joshua 5:14).

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Visions of God in the Bible

INTRODUCTION (continued)

In vision **Isaiah** saw the Lord sitting on His throne amid the angelic host (Isaiah 6:1-4). He immediately reacted by lamenting, “Woe is me...because I am a man of unclean lips...for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts” (Isaiah 6:5).

When **Ezekiel** saw “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord,” he, like the others, fell down on his face (Ezekiel 1:28). **Experiencing firsthand the revealed majesty of God’s splendor instantly humbled these prophets and patriarchs of old. Theirs were dramatic, life-changing experiences.**

The Second Testament *unveils* the great God of the universe in the person of Jesus Christ. On the momentous occasions when Christ’s disciples caught a glimpse of God’s majestic powers as revealed through Jesus’ miracles, their reactions reflected **an awesome encounter with an unseen and powerful world far different than ours.**

Paul, who had his own remarkable, personal encounters with God wrote: “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from Him and to Him and through Him are all things. To Him be glory forever, Amen...Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, to offer yourselves as living sacrifices [*like Jesus did!*], holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship.” (Romans 11:33-12:1.)

Paul described the Lord to his son in the faith, Timothy, this way: “...He who is the Blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power.” (1 Timothy 6:15-16).

The awesome glory of God the Father and Jesus Christ far exceed anything we can even imagine. Realizing this should lead us, in the spirit of worship, to a profound sense of wonder, humility, praise, and honor to God like those who have gone before us.

Holy Father, revive us again! Pour out the latter rain of Your Spirit upon us!

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Visions of God in the Bible

JACOB. (Genesis 28:12-13) – Dreamed of a ladder set up on earth, and the top of it reached to heaven...”And behold, the LORD stood above it.”

MOSES, AARON, NADAB, ABILU, and seventy elders. (Exodus 24:1-10) – “...saw the God of Israel.” Afterwards, Moses met God to receive the tablet of commandments.

MOSES. (Exodus 33:23) – Moses asked God to show him His glory. God let Moses see His back only as His glory passed by him. Resulted in Moses’ radiant face (Exodus 34:29-35).

MICAIAH. (2 Chronicles 18:18) Kings Ahab (Israel) and Jehoshaphat (Judah) readied to fight Ramoth Gilead. Sought Micaiah, a prophet of the LORD, who saw God on His throne.

ISAIAH. (Isaiah 6:1-5) – “saw the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple.” He saw worshipping angels with six wings,

EZEKIEL (Ezekiel 1:26-28; 10:1) – “saw the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone and...the likeness as the appearance of a man above it.” Fire. Light. Color.

DANIEL. (Daniel 7:9-14) – Four winds, four beasts in heaven – “thrones were set in place and the Ancient of Days took His seat. Clothing white as snow. Hair white like wool. His throne flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire flowing out from Him. Millions attended Him. The Son of Man appeared before them.

PETER. (Matthew 17:2; 2 Peter 1:16) – On the Mount of Transfiguration, saw a glimpse of Jesus in His true glory. “His face shone like the sun, His clothes became white as the light.”

STEPHEN. (Acts 7:55-56) – “...looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus (the Son of Man) standing at the right hand of God.”

PAUL. (Acts 7:55; 26:13; 2 Corinthians 12:2) – Out of a light from heaven, heard Jesus on the Road to Damascus, blinded for three days; light was brighter than the sun. Also saw a vision of the third heaven which he could not speak about.

JOHN. (Revelation 1:13-17; 4:2-11-chapter 5; 19:11-16) – First, a vision of Jesus, then a vision of God and Jesus, then Jesus again, coming to rule the earth as “King of kings, and Lord of lords.”

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Visions of God in the Bible

SIMILARITIES

1. No Real Description of God. Great as these visions are, none of them contain a real description of God the Father. Many speak in some detail of the glory surrounding God; “someone” on a throne, a sense of great size, the appearance of jewels (sparkling colors), etc. Why? Brilliant light obscured the view. In Revelation, John gives more detail in describing the Son.

2. Light and Fire. A common feature of many of these visions is that of the surrounding brilliant light—so bright that like the sun it was nigh impossible to look at it and appeared like blazing fire. During Jesus’ transfiguration, His face ‘shone like the sun’ as did His clothing; Paul saw a light “brighter than the sun”. John saw brilliant colors with the light. See: **(1 John 1:5; Revelation 21:23; Isaiah 60:19)**. Light came first in God’s creation (Genesis 1:3).

3. Activity. Ezekiel’s and John’s visions have a tremendous amount of activity going on about the throne of God. Lightning, thunder, worship, Jesus appearing as the Lamb of God, angels by the millions, every creature in heaven and earth joining in worship. Heaven is a busy place...for the ageless ones...us!



4. Angelic Figures. Isaiah saw seraphs (angels) constantly flying and saying “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.” Ezekiel saw “four living creatures in constant motion, whom he later referred to as ‘cherubim.’ There is an innumerable host of angels; we know the names of two ‘higher up’ angels: Gabriel and Michael. We all have angels assigned to us (Matt. 18:10).

5. Worship. Remember the scripture, “Every knee will bow and every mouth will confess that Jesus is Lord”? (Phil. 2:10). Revelation seems to confirm this. It raises some questions about eternal (*‘aidios’*, *‘aionios’*) judgment. Worship is constant in heaven because we will see Him as He is and finally KNOW Him. Our understanding will be ‘set free’.

6. Affect on the Seer. Ezekiel fell face down. John, when he saw Jesus glorified, fell as though dead. To those who saw them, these visions were over-whelming and powerful.

The spiritual side of life is the true reality!!!

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CONCLUSIONS

In John's vision, the twenty-four elders keep saying, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being." God created all things by His Word. That must be our own declaration; that is what Scripture says. Everything we are, everything we have, and everything we hope to be, comes from God.

The word 'awesome' applies specifically and most appropriately to God and God alone. No one else, nothing else, is in the running! God is great, God is tremendous, God is magnificent, God is glorious! God is our Father! Abba! Jesus is our Lord and King! Our Savior forever! -*Visions of God in Scripture* by James L. Morrisson.

A few closing words: This "glorious, limitless, amazing, incredible, expansive, incomparable, marvelous, stunning, staggering, majestic, mighty, matchless, spectacular, outstanding, tremendous, immense, infinite, vast, grand, triumphant, victorious, precious, radiant, peerless, wonderful, magnificent God has chosen to place all of His fullness through Christ where? INSIDE OF YOU!" –*Jesus Manifesto*, Leonard Sweet, Frank Viola

Remember

GOD is our FATHER (Matthew 6:9)

- 1. His patience and kindness never runs out.** (Ps. 103:12,17; 106:1)
- 2. He is always approachable.** (Heb. 4:16; Ps. 121:3; 138:3)
- 3. You will never have to earn his love.** (Rom. 5:8)
- 4. You will never blow it enough to lose his love.** (Rom. 8:38-39; 2 Cor. 5:8)
- 5. He has your very best in mind.** (Rom. 8:32, Matt. 7:11)
- 6. He loves you enough to discipline you.** (Prov. 3:11-12; 13:24)
- 7. His timing is perfect.** (Ps. 84:11)
- 8. He gives wisdom generously.** (James 1:5)
- 9. He lets you make your own choices.** (Rom. 8:28)
- 10. He knows you intimately.** (Ps. 139)

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Our Response to Majesty

To apply the biblical doctrine of the majesty of God to our own walk with God, let's ask ourselves the same three questions that Isaiah asks in God's name to the disillusioned and struggling Israelites after they resorted to making their own rules and fighting their own fights.

“One: **‘To whom then will you compare Me, or who is My equal?’** (Isa. 40:25-26). *This question rebukes wrong thoughts about God.* This is where most of us go astray. **Our thoughts of God are not great enough, we fail to reckon with the reality of God's limitless wisdom and power.**” (88)

“We think of God as too much like what we are. Put this mistake right, says God: learn to acknowledge the full majesty of your incomparable God and Savior.” (88)

“Two: **“Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord and my cause is disregarded by my God?** (Isa. 40:27). *This question rebukes wrong thoughts about ourselves, such as, why has God gone absent in my life or why am I struggling with life?* God never abandons anyone on whom He has set His love; nor does Christ, the Good Shepherd, ever lose track of His sheep.” The answer here requires some serious introspection and self-exam.

We need to remember that unbelief, pessimism and distrust deeply dishonors our great God and Savior, and never solves our problems. Trust Him, cling to Him when darkness and emptiness invade your life, and God cannot be found. Make sure you are open and obedient to God and His Word; then take up the full armor of God and protect your heart and mind from the Deceiver...

“Three: **‘Have you not known? Have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary?’** (Isaiah 40:28-31). *This question rebukes our slowness to believe in God's majesty.* (89)

How slow we are to believe in God as God, sovereign, all-seeing and almighty! The need for us is to ‘wait upon the LORD in meditations on His majesty until we find our strength renewed, our hearts refreshed, and our spirits quickened to God again. (89)

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How to Position Your Life in the Greatness of God

God promises us an abundant life, but we can't have abundance unless we position ourselves in the greatness of God. The Bible says that without a vision, the people perish (Proverbs 29:18). We must have a vision of the greatness of God and pray to be God-focused so we can walk in true freedom.

The truth is that we are a desperate people. As we search to find answers to why the abundant life that Jesus promised is always just beyond our reach, we are led by the Holy Spirit to the biblical truth of the selfless, exchanged life: The end of self becomes the beginning of the fullness of God within us. God wants us to live in that place of dependence on Him.

God wants to position you in His greatness! This involves bringing us to the end of ourselves. These experiences are often described as being 'desert experiences' or 'dark nights of the soul'; times of great testing and searching for God. God is found in the desert and in the dark nights of the soul when we are desperately leaning on Him with no other path of resolution. It is here that we surrender to Him and He reveals His greatness and His faithfulness to us.

Some lose hope and think there is no one who understands their situation. God understands. (Psalm 25:3; 130:5; Isaiah 40:31; Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 15:13; Proverbs 23:18; Lamentations 3:21-22)

POSITIONING YOURSELF IN GOD'S GREATNESS:

★**Speak 'Life' Words over Your Circumstances.** Break the power of hopelessness by speaking 'life' words. Pray the above verses of hope over your life. Put your name in the verses.

★**Ask God for a Great Vision of Who He Is.** Ask Him to help you walk in a new level of trust. Pray Psalm 145 verse by verse back to Him in your own words.

★**Praise God for His Greatness and Splendor.** There is enormous power in a thankful heart. Rise to a new dimension of praise and thankfulness to God.

★**Start a Prayer Journal.** Let God speak to you and write down what He says. Pray scriptures that proclaim God's greatness: like Psalms 93, 96, 98.

★**Right Now Thank God for the Most Difficult Thing in Your Life.** Thank Him that He will use it for your good. In your difficult situation, is not your hand in the hand of the Almighty One who is on your side and who can do all things on your behalf?

-Debbie Przybylski, Intercessors Arise International

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Questions & Reflections

1. *Big Question:* According to Colossians 1:15–19, what are some reasons why Christ should have first place in our lives, church, society, and in all of creation?
2. *Interpretation Question:* What does Paul mean to infer about Christ by saying He is the “image” of God? (John 14:9)
3. *Interpretation Question:* In what ways did Christ uniquely demonstrate God the Father when he came to the earth? (John 8:28; 14:10)
4. *Interpretation Question:* How does Christ represent God’s authority? (John 5:22; 17:2)
5. *Life Application Question:* What life applications can we take from Christ being the “image” of God?
6. *Interpretation Question:* What does the term “firstborn” mean in Scripture and therefore in this context? (Luke 2:7; story of Jacob and Esau re: birthright)

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7. *Interpretation Question:* Why does Paul say that Christ should be exalted over all creation as the firstborn according to Colossians 1:16–17?

8. *Reflection:* Since Christ is the Creator of all things: (We should give Him thanks, honor and glory; seek to fulfill His purposes for our lives, trust Him with our care, and seek His wisdom to guide us in all things. We can go to Him for everything because in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.)

9. *Interpretation Question:* What does Paul mean by Christ being “before all things” (v. 17)?

10. *Life Application Question:* What are some applications we can take from the fact that Christ is our sustainer?

11. *Interpretation Question:* What does Paul mean by the metaphor of Christ being the Head of the church?

12. *Life Application Question:* In what ways are you seeking to stay dynamically connected to the Head? How can you tell when you are not as connected as you should be?

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Questions & Reflections (continued)

Reflection - (Colossians 1:18) How should the assertion that Jesus is the "Head of the body, the church" affect the way we conceive of the church? Is he talking about the universal church or a local congregation, or both? If we believe that Jesus is the Head of the church, how should that affect the way we conduct our life and ministry as the church? In what ways does the visible church represent the "Head"? How well do we as the body follow his leadership?

Reflection - (Colossians 1:15a, 19) The great understanding of Judaism was that God is spirit, not physical. That he is invisible. Any idol that tries to depict him is blasphemous. So what is the significance of the statement that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God"? According to verse 19, to what degree does this image accurately represent God? Is Jesus actually God in the flesh, or only a manifestation of God, a kind of holograph?*