

Kingdom Perspectives – Part 5

Welcome to Kingdom Perspectives, part 5, October 8, 2008. In part 1 we went through Kingdom Roots and Content; part 2 Kingdom Views; part 3 Kingdom Attire; part 4 Kingdom Choices; and today we'll look at Kingdom Glory. In earlier sessions we used a working definition of the glory of God. We defined the glory of God as the intrinsic infinite eternal perfections of God.

Next poster. The glory of God is not limited to, but does include His character. Here I'm going to draw from Exodus 33:20-24 and Exodus 34:5-8. The scriptural setting is when Moses asked to see the glory of God. God gave Moses a protected glimpse of Himself by hiding Moses in the cleft of a rock. Then God gave Moses a verbal description of the character traits of God. It included a word such as lovingkindness that we don't commonly use, so I've somewhat adapted the list to our present day language. But the character traits of God will unmistakably include love, compassion, grace, mercy, forgiveness, kindness, truth, justice, and longsuffering. Long-suffering would include such things in our usage as patience, forbearance, and slowness to anger.

Next poster. The glory of God includes His character traits, but is not limited to His character traits. It also includes His sovereignty. His sovereignty includes the intrinsic infinite eternal perfections of His omniscience, His omnipresence, and His omnipotence. He is all knowing, all present, and all powerful. If God were not omniscient, then something could occur outside of His knowledge and in that unknown area, He could not be sovereign. If God were not omnipresent, then something could occur wherever God is not. And in that unoccupied area, He could not be sovereign. If God were not omnipotent, then something could occur that transcended the power of God and in that area of relative weakness He could not be omnipotent or not be sovereign. However, a sovereign God can sovereignly determine to limit the expression of His sovereignty. Thus, He is omniscient except for what He sovereignly chooses not to know. He is omnipresent except for where He chooses in His sovereignty not to be. He is omnipotent except when He chooses to limit His sovereignty and to be relatively weak rather than to express His omnipotence. So the question is never is God sovereign? For He is. He is sovereign, and as part of His sovereignty, He can sovereignly choose not to fully express His sovereignty at any moment. Thus, His sovereignty may be expressed or unexpressed. His sovereignty may be overt or hidden. The glory of God includes His character and His sovereignty in their infinite intrinsic eternal perfections.

Next poster. Glory is used several different ways in the Bible. The most basic way relates to God Himself. I call this the intrinsic glory of God. This relates to what God is. This means His intrinsic infinite eternal perfections which include His character attributes and His sovereignty. There is a usage of glory that does not relate to what God is; but instead relates to that which God is to receive. I call this extrinsic glory since it occurs outside of God, but is directed to God. This extrinsic glory is what is to be given to God in response to His intrinsic glory. Romans 3:23 tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. This means that all have fallen short of God's intrinsic eternal infinite perfections. We've also fallen short in another way. We have fallen short not only of His intrinsic glory, we've fallen short in our rendering to Him the extrinsic glory that is merited by His intrinsic glory. I Corinthians 13:12 (KJV) tells us that for now we see through a glass darkly. Because of sin we have a dim view of the glory of God. Our

dim view of the intrinsic glory of God is what results in our directing relatively miniscule extrinsic glory back to God. We give little glory to God while declaring that God should be satisfied with whatever glory we determine that He should be satisfied with. That is to fulfill Romans 1:25 and to worship the creature as the determiner of how much glory God should receive instead of looking at God to see the fullness of His intrinsic glory and then giving Him all the glory that He merits.

Glory can also be used in a more general sense. It can relate to the splendor of an item such as the Biblical mention of the splendor of the sun, of the moon, and of the stars. Glory can also mean to boast as when one boasts of a quality or of an accomplishment or a possession. I Corinthians 1:29 tells us that no man should boast before God. Jeremiah 9:23 tells us to let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. Paul would write in Galatians 6:14 – May it never be that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. A Christian only has two options in this setting. A Christian can give extrinsic glory to God by boasting only of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. That is to be in the spirit. A Christian may give glory to self. When a Christian gives glory to self, what he is doing is boasting of his own splendor in the presence of a holy God. This is to be in the flesh. Any boasting on our part before a holy God simply means that we have a very dim view of the intrinsic glory of God. That results in our weak praise, our weak thanksgiving, and our weak worship because those are all indicators that we have a dim view of the intrinsic eternal infinite perfections of God both in regard to His character and His sovereignty.

Next poster. Now that we've reviewed some basic considerations, let's examine some aspects of how that glory is displayed. The overarching attribute of God is that He is holy. The primary meaning of that is that God is other than. To whom would you compare Me? He's one of a kind. And not one of a kind that differs by slight degree from other things; but He's just one of a kind that's just out there, other than, indescribable, incomprehensible. You cannot pick a frame of reference by which to fully grasp the other thanness of God. His glory is also holy in the sense that His glory is an other than glory. His intrinsic eternal infinite perfections are truly other than. Such an other than glory must be expressed in an other than way and that way relates to His sovereignty which is other than; but serves as a vehicle by which His character glory is expressed. Thus, His character glory and all its attributes are expressed through His sovereignty glory. The reverse polarity is also true. His sovereignty glory is expressed through His character attributes. I've chosen His character attributes of love and righteousness to make the point on this particular poster.

So here is the point. God in His sovereignty could totally express His sovereignty directly including at all times and in all ways. But if He did so, then no choice of any created being would ever be allowed. It would not even be possible. That would exclude the display of His love because love is relational and relational requires choice. Recall that God in His sovereignty may sovereignly choose to restrain the expression of His sovereignty. And that's what allows room for choice. He does so that it may be of love and not of mechanical robotic slavery. By passing His sovereignty through His character attribute of love, He gives us choice that we may reciprocally choose to display love back to Him. When we see the beauty of His character attributes in all its perfection, which includes His love, then we can respond by giving love back to Him in response to seeing the glory of His intrinsic love. That is to display His love

indirectly. We only display His glory in response to seeing His glory. That's why Scripture would tell us that love is a fruit of the Spirit, not a fruit of the will. Love flows from seeing His love. So if we're going to give extrinsic glory back to God by loving Him, it is done in response to seeing His intrinsic glory of love. That's why Scripture would tell us in I John 4:19 that we love because He first loved us. That's why we cannot conjure up love by our own willpower. So love that is a fruit of the Spirit is that love which brings glory to Jesus because that's what the Spirit came to do. And that love is love which is flowing in reciprocation to seeing the fullness of the perfection of the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

The same can be said of righteousness. God could express His sovereignty at all times directly and totally. If so, no man could ever sin. Every man would always be totally righteous if God displayed His sovereignty directly and totally at all times. God did not do so. God sovereignly restrained the expression of His sovereignty. Why did He do so? Because other aspects of His intrinsic glory can only be expressed and seen and known and understood in the presence of unrighteousness. Such attributes include compassion, grace, mercy, forgiveness, and long-suffering. Justice could never be displayed because there would be no unrighteousness to judge. Why does God allow choice? That it may be of love and not robotic slavery. Why does God allow wrong choices? That He may display His glory including His love, His compassion, His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness, His longsuffering, and His justice.

God may sovereignly choose to express His glory directly and totally. He did this when he created the heavens and the Earth. God may also choose, in His sovereignty, to sovereignly restrain the expression of His sovereignty in order to display the fullness of His character attributes that could not be known by any other manner. Many of the character attributes of God would simply be unknown if He did not allow choice, and thus, allow for the lack of reciprocity of love and allow for unrighteousness to occur. Ephesians 2:1-7 is a scripture that testifies of this because it tells us that we were children of wrath, servants of Satan. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love, saved us, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. I'll review them again. Note the character attributes of God that are on display in this scripture: mercy, love, grace, kindness displayed in Christ Jesus. He saved us from His wrath which is His justice poured out on all unrighteousness. Every moment that God holds back the pouring out of His wrath on unrighteousness is testimony to His longsuffering, His patience, His slowness to anger, His forbearance, all of which are part of the intrinsic eternal infinite perfections of God. But they could not be known except He allow unrighteousness to occur. So God does sovereignly restrain the expression of His sovereignty to allow choice and to allow unrighteous choices. This allows Him to display the fullness of His intrinsic eternal infinite perfections. God at other times may choose to display His sovereignty directly and totally and in all ways.

There's one other connection on this poster here at the bottom that I've not addressed to this point. This is a horizontal line pointing in both directions connecting the direct display of His glory and His sovereignty, and the other giving opportunity to display His glory indirectly by responding to Him. When God limits the expression of His sovereignty to allow opportunity to display His glory indirectly, He does not cease being sovereign. He never relinquishes sovereignty though He may restrain the expression of sovereignty. In His sovereignty, He may at any moment choose to express His sovereignty into any area where heretofore He had

restrained His sovereignty to allow opportunity to display His glory indirectly. Likewise He can move in the opposite direction. He may, at any moment, choose to restrain His sovereignty to allow opportunity in any area where heretofore He had chosen to display His sovereignty directly and totally. In other words He can allow opportunity and then at His pleasure can immediately move over to sovereignly display His glory directly. Or if He is displaying His sovereignty directly He may at any moment choose to refrain from full expression of His sovereignty to allow opportunity to display His glory indirectly.

The Bible is full of such expressions of the sovereignty of God. Acts 16:14 – And a certain woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshipper of God, was listening, and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. Lydia didn't open her own heart. The Lord opened her heart to respond to the things by Paul. In the book of Exodus we know that God repeatedly hardened the heart of Pharaoh. One of my favorites relates to the book of Isaiah. That book was written roughly about 700 BC. Recall that Cyrus of Persia issued a decree for the Jews to return to Jerusalem about 538 BC. Observe how God intrudes in human affairs for His pleasure in His sovereignty at any time and in any way of His choosing. These prophecies that I'm about to review were given by Isaiah approximately 150 years before their fulfillment. I'm going to extract from Isaiah 44:26 through Isaiah 45:6. And the Lord says through the prophet, it is I Who says of Jerusalem, she will be inhabited. It is I Who says of Cyrus, he is my shepherd. And he (Cyrus) will perform all of My desire. And he (Cyrus) declares of Jerusalem she will be built and of the temple your foundation will be laid. Thus says the Lord to Cyrus, His anointed, whom I have taken by the right hand to subdue nations before him. I, God, have also called you by your name. I, God, have given you a title of honor though you have not known Me. Romans 4:17 tells us that God calls those things which are not as though they were. That's an expression of His sovereignty. Let's flesh out that verse to allow us to understand the fullness of it. We can explain that verse by stating it this way. God, Who calls the things which are not, yet, but which assuredly will be, because they are flowing out of the sovereignty of God, as though they already were. That's why verb tense is less important to God. He can speak in the present tense or the past tense for something which has not even historically unfolded because it has not occurred, yet, but it assuredly will, because it flows out of the sovereignty of God.

So let's go back to God and His sovereignty as He relates to Cyrus. God, in His sovereignty, declared that there would be Cyrus before there was Cyrus. He declared that Cyrus would be a conqueror and receive honor before there was a Cyrus. He declared that Cyrus would decree the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity before the Babylonian captivity and before Persia overthrew Babylon after the Babylonian captivity. God declared that Cyrus would be His servant even though Cyrus would not even know Him. Now I'm sure that Cyrus made many choices where God did not sovereignly intrude as God restrained the expression of His sovereignty to allow Cyrus to make choices including unrighteous choices. But God never relinquished His sovereignty while doing so. These verses are samples of how God restrains the expression of His sovereignty, but retains sovereignty, and can sovereignly choose to manifest sovereignty, fully and totally at any time in order to accomplish His purposes including writing history beforehand. That is the sovereignty of God. So it's never a question of whether He's sovereign or not. The question is, is He fully expressing it totally and completely at any moment or not?

Next poster. This poster is amplified a bit in its detail to show us how this continues to play out. Glory includes His character attributes as well as His sovereignty. His character attributes of His glory are expressed through His sovereignty. Then His sovereignty is expressed through His character attributes. I've chosen love to make this connection on this particular poster. When His sovereignty is restrained that it may be of love and not mechanical robotic slavery, that allows us choice. We exercise our choice, and no matter what choice we exercise, we display His glory in one way or another. Sovereignty may be expressed or restrained. When it is expressed directly and totally, it displays His sovereign glory in its fullness. When it is restrained, it gives me choice. My choice may take many forms and many situations; but fundamentally, it's always the same choice between God and un-God, between being God determined and being self determined. When I choose God I reciprocate His love, choose righteousness and display His glory indirectly. Whenever I choose un-God I return choice to God. In the face of my ungodly choices, God's choice can be one of two, speaking in broad terms. God may sovereignly choose to give me justice. This displays His glory. Why? Because justice is one of His character attributes. So His justice is part of His intrinsic infinite eternal perfections; thus, part of His glory. Alternatively He may choose to give me grace and thus display His glory. Why? Because grace is part of His glory. It's one of His character attributes. Grace is one of His intrinsic infinite eternal perfections.

So if you observe this, you'll see that in all of these pathways is displayed the glory of God in one way or another. If He expresses His sovereignty directly and totally, He displays His glory. If He restrains His sovereignty by passing through the character attribute of love, as part of His glory, it gives me choice. If I choose God, I display His glory. If I choose un-God, and God chooses in response to my ungodly choice, to give me justice, He displays His glory. If He gives me grace, He displays His glory. Understanding this flow diagram will help you to understand such scriptures as Isaiah 6:3 where it says, the whole Earth is full of His glory. So if I see somebody behaving in unrighteous choices, I can see their unrighteous choices; but I could also see the patience of God. I can see the slowness to anger of God. I can see the forbearance of God. Thus I'm seeing the glory of God because those are all part of the character attributes of God.

Next poster. I can try to steal His glory, and we do this in many ways, and I've written a few samples here. I can steal His glory by declaring His nonexistence. This is what the atheist does with his finite peanut brain, thinking that he can understand all of everything in existence to declare that there is no God. I can declare His impotence and thus steal His glory. This is the agnostic. The agnostic says, I don't know if there's a God and I don't think anybody can know. So the agnostic, by saying that, is declaring that if God is, He is too impotent to reveal Himself to me in a way that I would know Him. I can steal His glory by declaring what He must be or do. This is a person who says, oh, if God would only do that, then I would know He loves me, instead of going to the Word of God and letting God declare the glory of His love and the fullness of its perfection from His Holy Scripture. That's to judge God and thus steal His glory. I can steal His glory by declaring my own righteousness before Him. Well I'm purer than other people in the church, so God would best spend His time perfecting them rather than me. That's to declare what level of righteousness that our glorious God should be satisfied with, which is to steal His glory. I can steal His glory by declaring that I'll only worship that which I understand.

That declares that if you have any lack of worship, it's God's fault, because He gave you too little understanding to result in worship, which is again another way of judging God. All of these behaviors, plus others, give God no extrinsic glory because we refuse to see His intrinsic glory. We must refuse to see it because Scripture tells us the whole Earth is full of it. Part of God's glory is that He alone is worthy of glory. That's why He states in Isaiah 42:8, I will not give My glory to another. When you look at the intrinsic eternal infinite perfections of God in His character attributes and His sovereignty, who else is worthy of any glory in comparison to that incomparable God? So He should not share His glory because nothing else is worthy of glory. Even when we refuse to give Him glory, He displays His glory, by giving us grace or justice, both of which are part of His glory. So there is no place that you can look that you do not see the glory of God.

Next poster. This I have called the glory cycle. We begin with God's intrinsic glory. We see His intrinsic glory dimly because we see through a glass dimly. But even then, all men see the glory of God to some degree, and are accountable for responding to what they see. That's why Romans 1:18-19 can tell us that every man is without excuse because God is seen through what has been made. So a person who would look at this bottle of water and declare that it was intelligent design, and filled with water by choice of a creature, would look at the complexity of the heavens and the Earth and say, surely by chance and coincidence, not by a creator with a design. Can you imagine the ostentatious attitude that it takes for a human being to make such a declaration? So we see it dimly, but see it we do, to a point where all men are accountable even by looking at what has been made. As a Christian, however, I have a choice. I can function in the flesh or I can function in the spirit. If I function in the flesh, I bring glory to self. This, of course, leads to defeat, including defeat in giving God any extrinsic glory. When we are in the flesh, what we're doing is boasting of our own splendor. If you remember the general definition of glory, it included the splendor of any object or to boast. So when a Christian chooses to live in the flesh, even trying to create Christlikeness by their own willpower, that person is boasting of their own splendor to reach a level of perfection that somehow the intrinsic eternal perfect God should be satisfied with, he is going to end up in defeat, failure and death, meaning death to the abundant life, death to his testimony, and so on.

Alternatively I can function in the spirit. In the spirit I fix my gaze upon Jesus. Why? Because that's where God told me to gaze. So if I'm responding to the intrinsic glory of God, and He has written His Word for me, and I look at that Word, and I then fix my gaze where the Word of God tells me to look, then I am beginning to give Him extrinsic glory in response to seeing His intrinsic glory. As I fix my gaze upon Jesus Christ, I begin to see the intrinsic glory of God evermore clearly. Why? Because if I see the Son, I have seen the Father. The greater that I see the intrinsic glory of God, the greater is the extrinsic glory that I return to Him. And this is done by two pathways that we've covered before. In the first pathway I can give Him extrinsic glory by growing in the Sweet Sixteen. And those of you who were around at the time will recall that the Sweet Sixteen are: pray, praise, seek, surrender, rejoice, repent, rest, humble, obey, give, forgive, thank, tremble, trust, testify, and teach. If we're engaged in the Sweet Sixteen we are giving Him extrinsic glory in response to seeing His intrinsic glory.

In the second pathway that I've diagrammatically shown, we grow in the fruit of the Spirit and thus give Him extrinsic glory. We know these very well: love, joy, peace, goodness, kindness,

faithfulness, gentleness, patience, and self control. Now I show these two pathways as separate here for diagrammatic purposes, because we covered them at two separate times in this series of teachings. So I wanted you to recognize their inclusion in the glory cycle. But the truth is these are always yoked. You cannot grow in the Sweet Sixteen without simultaneously growing in the fruit of the Spirit. And if you're growing in the fruit of the Spirit, you will be simultaneously growing in the Sweet Sixteen. The Holy Spirit produces this fruit because this fruit represents the character attributes of God. As you grow in the fruit of the Spirit, you are being transformed into Christlikeness and Christlikeness is the image of God. Colossians 1:15 tells us that Christ is the image of the invisible God. As this transformation occurs through the fruit of the Spirit, we're gradually changed toward His intrinsic infinite eternal perfections which are the character attributes of His glory. Thus we are transformed from one level of glory, to another level of glory that's progressively higher into Christlikeness.

Understanding these things helps us understand II Corinthians 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 from the Lord, the Spirit. Now that's a busy verse. So let's take it phrase by phrase. Notice the pathway in that verse of II Corinthians 3:18...But we all...all means all Christians because the Corinthian letter is written to Christians. But we all with an unveiled face...means that we have been given access to see God through seeing Jesus Christ because in Him the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily. Beholding as in a mirror means that we still see only in part, namely through a glass dimly because of the corruption secondary to our sin nature. We see dimly as we're told in I Corinthians 13:12. But even though we see through a mirror dimly, we have been given access to see, and we're still to look at the mirror to see the glory of God and not look at self. This means to fix our gaze upon Jesus. Why? Because the intrinsic eternal infinite perfections of God are revealed to us in the Son Who is the image of the invisible God. Thus as we look at the mirror that we see through Jesus Christ, we see the intrinsic glory of God revealed. As we see His intrinsic glory, we are transformed into His image which is His intrinsic glory. That's why we progressively grow from glory to glory and this occurs from the power of the Spirit. Notice that that only occurs if we behold His glory, not if we behold self. We become what we behold. It's that simple. Functioning in the spirit is to behold Jesus Christ in all His glory and that's what transforms us through the power of the Holy Spirit into the image of Jesus Christ. Being in the flesh is to behold self and to use the power of self to try to placate God and produce Christlikeness, including conjuring up love. That will always bring glory to self and always end in defeat in our life as Christians on planet Earth after salvation. So if we can understand that our extrinsic glory that flows to Him is in direct response to seeing with clarity His intrinsic glory. Anything else is a work of the flesh.

Understanding the glory cycle will help us understand the paradox presented in Philippians 2:12-13. We're told to work out our salvation. That's a command. We're also told how to work it out—with fear and trembling. That's to hold God in awe and reverence. If you do not fear God, you will turn into the flesh during your Christian walk. If you turn into the flesh, you will abort the glory cycle. You will have dead works, dead testimony and dead abundant life. But if you do fear God, if you do regard God in awe and reverence, you will turn into the spirit. And for us as Christians that is to gaze upon Jesus. When we gaze upon Jesus to see the intrinsic perfections of God, the Holy Spirit is loosed, because the Holy Spirit came to bear witness of Jesus, not to bear witness of you trying to use the flesh to bring glory to God. The Holy Spirit

came to bring glory to Jesus and you bring glory to what you behold. If you're beholding how well you're performing your church programs, you're bringing glory to self, not to God, because the glory you're giving is something you're conjuring up and producing through the power of self, not that which flows reciprocally from evermore clearly seeing the intrinsic perfections of your God in His glory. So we have a role and our role is to fix our gaze upon Jesus. God has a role. His role is to transform us. We give Him extrinsic glory by fixing our gaze upon His Son. But God gets all the glory because it is His Son, and He gets all the glory by willing and working in us to transform us from glory to glory into the image of His Son Who's worthy of all glory. And that's where the fruit of the Spirit come from. The fruit of the Spirit never come from a work of the flesh bringing glory to self by, for instance, trying to conjure up love. You cannot try to grow in love. It'll end in defeat, failure, and death. But if you look at Jesus Christ Who is revealing to us the intrinsic perfections of God, including love, you will grow in love.

So what can we say at any time other than all glory to our all glorious God? How do we do that? By knowing only Jesus Christ and Him crucified; by teaching only Jesus Christ and Him crucified; by boasting only of the splendor of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, because that's how God views the reality of how He wants us to do this thing because it is written. So if we regard with awe and reverence the splendor of the intrinsic glory of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, we will die to ever boasting of our own splendor, because how can we boast of our love when we're looking at the Son of God, not considering equality with God something to be grasped but came to Earth in the form of a man to be tempted such as we are yet without sin, to die the horror of the death on the cross, taking the fullness of the wrath of God on all unrighteousness, to pay for all sins for all men for all time, how are we going to conjure up love compared to that love that we see in Jesus Christ and Him crucified? So the way to grow in love is never to concentrate on growing in love. That's to be self looking at self trying to improve self. It is to look at Who God is, including specifically Jesus Christ and Him crucified, because therein is revealed the intrinsic eternal infinite perfections of God. And when we gaze there, we will give Him extrinsic glory in response to the intrinsic glory that's revealed in Jesus Christ and Him crucified and we will be transformed from glory to glory into the image of Christ who is the image of the invisible God and we will complete the glory cycle.

So my time is up and I thank you for yours.