

# Introduction

## *A Visitation of Glory*

My wife, Sue, had no idea what she was about to behold as she unlocked the doors of the dark and empty Mott Auditorium in the middle of the night. Our two young daughters, Joy and Mary, and their friend Christine stood by her side. As the doors opened, all of them gasped in unison as they immediately beheld an unparalleled vision of the manifest glory of heaven. Sue and the girls stood transfixed, trying to take it all in.

A white mist filled the building. Through the mist they saw thousands of translucent doves resting on the chairs and lining the rafters. Bright colors of heaven, previously unknown, flooded their eyes. The entire floor was covered in a carpet of luminous grass and laced with heavenly flowers in brilliant colors that blazed like jewels. They could hear strains of the most beautiful music and realized it was the flowers singing. Hundreds of majestic angels of every size and ethnicity were visible throughout the vast auditorium, many of them enormous, towering thirty to forty feet toward the ceiling.

It was in the early hours on a Sunday morning in May 1995, long after the Saturday evening service had ended. Our church, Harvest Rock, was barely a year old. We had earnestly sought a visitation from the Lord during that first year, and we had taken a major step of faith to rent Mott Auditorium for our meetings. At \$35,000 a month, it was a great stretch for us. We had been holding meetings at the Mott building in north Pasadena almost nightly for over a month, and our congregation was experiencing wonderful times in the Lord.

Earlier on this particular Saturday night Sue and I had been tucked into bed, but I was having no success getting to sleep. Our daughter Joy and her friend Christine were camped in the living room, next to our bedroom, and we could hear their laughter, which had continued for some time. Finally I asked Sue if she would help the girls quiet down. Sleepily, she complied, crawling out of bed.

As Sue entered the living room, she realized that both girls had been overcome with holy laughter. Shaking under the power of the Holy Spirit, Christine cried out to my wife, “Mott, Mott, we’ve got to go to Mott!” indicating the auditorium. Joy immediately chimed in, “Yes, Mother, we’ve got to go to Mott!”

It was nearly one o’clock in the morning. Yet Sue sensed strongly that God was moving on the children, so she decided to take them. She loaded the two girls and our younger daughter, Mary, into the family van and drove to the auditorium.

As they stood amazed by the glorious sights surrounding them, one of the girls cried, “We have to get Pastor Lou!” Lou Engle, one of our pastors at Harvest Rock Church, lived just across the street from the auditorium. He and his wife, Therese, had chosen that location so Lou could walk to the early morning prayer meetings he led daily. Lou has a passion for intercessory prayer, and since that night, he has become president of The Call, an international movement that has

mobilized massive assemblies of people who pray for revival and spiritual awakening all over the world.

Quickly crossing the street from Mott, Sue and the girls roused Lou from sleep to come and behold the glory-filled auditorium. Lou rushed back with them, and as he entered the auditorium, he felt a heaviness in the air, like a presence, but couldn't see anything. Sue and the girls, though, continued to see the vision they had gazed on earlier. Because the children were describing such spectacular things, including angels thirty to forty feet tall, Lou decided to separate Joy and Christine and interview each girl alone. Even under his detailed questioning, each child continued to describe the incredible sights and sounds in the same way. Lou was convinced the children were witnessing a heavenly visitation of the glory of God.

The next morning, I learned of the incident while on my way to the church. When I arrived, I, too, felt an increased presence of God in the building but saw nothing. Yet that night's meeting, which was conducted as usual, was clearly different. It marked the beginning of a period of angelic visitation and manifest glory in our services. For the next six months, the girls and other children continued to see angels during our meetings. It was as if heaven had descended on us.

That is what God's glory is—heaven coming to earth!

Harvest Rock Church has enjoyed seasons of heavenly visitation ever since that first manifestation of God's glory in our midst. These manifestations do not always come in the same way. There isn't always a visitation of angels, for example. Sometimes God's glory descends like a thick fog, filling the building, even though the sky outside is crystal clear. At other times we feel the glory of God as a weighty presence around us when we worship or pray. Yet whenever the glory of God comes, there is always some type of manifestation. His glory is weighty and heavy. It is real, with substance, impacting us and our surroundings. And we have discovered

that His glory carries His presence, and He is more real than anything else in the universe.

In His grace, God chose to bless our church with the manifest presence of His glory. His visitation marked us as a prophetic house and a dwelling place for His Spirit. Yet, like God Himself, His glory can never be fully contained or definitively explained. But His glory can be experienced in joyful awe and wonder. And as we have experienced traces of His glory we have been left hungry for more of Him.

In my heartfelt desire to know God, I am eager to experience more of His glory. I am finding in my encounters with His glory that I become more intimately acquainted with Him. My prayer with this book is that as I share my own experiences and those of others, you too will be encouraged to pursue the glory of God.

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## What Is Glory?

A member of Harvest Rock Church shared this story with me:

A few years ago, I was desperately seeking more of God. I spent hours praying and meditating on Scripture, but I couldn't seem to get filled. I wanted, indeed, craved *more!*

I had been in my bedroom seeking God on my face for several hours when I felt a presence begin to intensify in the room. It is hard to describe, but it felt like a warmth and peace invading the atmosphere. In my spirit, I heard the Lord quietly speak: *I want to come in here with you. May I get closer?* I audibly replied, "Yes, Lord."

The presence began to intensify. A sense of weight, a kind of heaviness, began to grow. I felt the warmth begin to surge around my body, as if I were being surrounded by a whirlpool of warm energy. It was exhilarating, and for a few moments I felt incredible peace and bliss, close to ecstasy. The presence kept intensifying, and suddenly I realized I was in the grip of Someone vast, beyond my comprehension.

I was overwhelmed by it all, and I cried out, “Lord, you’re frightening me.” Immediately, the presence pulled back and gave me space. I sensed at once both the Lord’s eagerness to be close to me and His desire to respect my limitations and not frighten me. It was a bittersweet moment, and I burst into tears as I suddenly understood how much more He longed for me than I did for Him.

This story makes me smile because it depicts a tendency we all have. We all want the Lord—until He actually shows up and we encounter His glory! Suddenly we are confronted by His reality, rather than just having knowledge about Him. At such times, all our doctrinal decrees of what God is like and how He behaves simply evaporate.

It is easy to confuse our ideas about God with God Himself. Even our ideas based on Scripture cannot contain the reality of direct exposure to God and His glory. Kris Vallotton, in his book *Developing a Supernatural Lifestyle*, puts it this way:

Many people know the Bible and think they know the Lord. The goal of the Scriptures is to lead us into a relationship with Jesus. Having a relationship with God should never be mistaken for knowing the Scriptures. If knowing the Bible was synonymous with knowing God, the Pharisees and Scribes would have rocked!<sup>1</sup>

If we want to know God personally and relate to Him intimately, we must be prepared to receive and experience His glory.

### **God and His Glory Inseparable**

We simply cannot have a living encounter with God without encountering His glory. This cannot happen any more than

I can visit you and leave my body at home. Everywhere I go my body goes, because my body and I are one. The same is true for God and His glory—they are one. When God shows up, so does His glory.

As God’s presence invades our surroundings, His glory enters and often manifests itself. This experience may be beautiful and inspiring, as it was for us with the angelic visitation at Mott Auditorium. Or, an experience of His glory may be overwhelming or heartrending or even mirthful. No matter what our experience, encountering His glory always impacts and changes us. It stretches our understanding of God and His ways and frequently challenges our current conceptions of Him. Although our words about God are safe and containable, God Himself is not, and this is also true of His glory. It is untamable, unpredictable, and frequently provokes controversy, especially when it violates our “norms” for God.

Just what is God’s glory?

## Glory Defined

Most attributes of God are far too vast to define. This applies whether we’re speaking of God’s mercy and love or of His righteousness and judgment. The same is true of His glory. The Bible uses words for *glory* more than 350 times, making it one of Scripture’s primary themes and one with many dimensions.

To help briefly define glory, I consulted two professors at Azusa Pacific University who are members of Harvest Rock Church, the husband-wife team of Dr. Todd Pokrifka, Professor of New Testament Theology, and Dr. Junia Pokrifka, Professor of Old Testament Theology. In their thorough study of the concept of God’s glory in Scripture, the Pokrifkas identified two main categories of glory: God’s *eternal glory*

and His *manifest glory*. Here is a summation of what they shared with me.

### God's Eternal Glory and His Manifest Glory

Very few passages in the Bible speak directly of or allude to God's *eternal* glory, but many refer to His *manifest* glory. The distinction between these two categories of glory can be illustrated in terms of light. In fact, the Bible often uses the language of light to describe God's glory.

Think of the sun and the sun's light. The *eternal* glory of God is like the sun itself, far too fiery and brilliant for us to encounter directly or even to look at. But the sun's light manifests itself to us in a variety of ways. It illuminates darkness, revealing the objects around us. It gives us spectacular light displays in beautiful sunrises and brilliant sunsets. It warms us and even tans our skin. Everywhere the sun goes, the sun's light goes. But the sun's light is not the sun itself. Rather, the light we experience from the sun is a *manifestation* of the sun.

This distinction is helpful in understanding God's glory. His *eternal* glory is like the sun: it is His very essence, beyond our comprehension or ability to encounter. Yet His *manifest* glory is like the sun's light: a reflection of Him we can encounter in ways we are able to perceive, whether through physical healing, a peaceful presence in our spirit or an angelic visitation.

### God's Eternal Glory in Scripture

Even before God's glory was *manifest* in creation, God had *eternal* glory. Jesus speaks of the glory He had with the Father prior to the creation of the world, a glory to which He would return after His ascension. "Now, Father, glorify me

in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began” (John 17:5).

Scripture also refers to God’s *eternal* glory as the brilliant and splendid light that God is. “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). In heaven, no light is necessary because God Himself is the source of all light visible to His creatures, with its beautiful nature and life-giving properties.

In Scripture God’s inherent, eternal glory is seen as His worthiness and importance. *Strong’s Dictionary* defines *glory* as “abundance, honor, glory, riches, wealth, splendor.” Likewise, the New Testament Greek word *doxa* speaks of God’s glory in terms of His brightness, praise, majesty and honor.

In the Old Testament, the most frequently used word for *glory* is the Hebrew *kabôd*, a word related to the verb *kabed*, which signifies “to be heavy.” Coupled with the Greek *doxa* and *Strong’s* definition, *kabôd* rounds out God’s glory as having weightiness and importance as well as value and worth.

In every sense of these definitions, Jesus Christ shares the same eternal glory and honor as God the Father: “Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever” (1 Peter 4:11).

## God’s Manifest Glory in Scripture

The *manifest* glory of God is God revealing Himself, in His eternal glory, in and through creation and people. Most references to God’s glory in Scripture are descriptions of His manifest glory. And God manifests His glory to us in many ways.

When God created the world, He revealed His glory in and through what He made. Simply put, creation is an expression

of God's manifest glory. The heavens lead all of creation in declaring the glory of God and in revealing the magnificent power, creativity and intelligence of God the Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Psalm 19:1). This glory remains evident even after the fall of humankind into sin and the subsequent corruption of creation.

Because humankind was created in God's image and likeness, human beings express the glory of God in a special way. "A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God" (1 Corinthians 11:7). Indeed, humankind was created to glorify God. The glory we're given is a "derived glory," which comes from our union with God through our obedience to Him and through our being filled with God's Spirit.

From the very beginning, God intended that humankind would know Him through His glory, as expressed in His manifest presence, His manifest nature and character and His manifest power. For this reason, God's *manifest glory* is the major focus of this book.

## A Working Definition of God's Glory

God's glory is far too vast and complex to comprehend, let alone ever to define perfectly. But to allow for clear communication in this book, I would like to propose this working definition:

God's glory is His manifest presence, by which He reveals His character of goodness and displays His power through signs and wonders.

Throughout Scripture, God calls His people to know Him, to glorify Him and to reflect His glory. To truly know God, we must encounter His glory. And the more intimately we know God, the more His glory will be revealed to us and in us.

In the next few chapters, we will delve more deeply into the different facets of God's *manifest* glory and explore the effects this glory has on our lives. We will examine (1) His manifest presence, (2) His manifest nature and character and (3) His manifest power. We'll look at examples of these in the Bible, throughout church history and in present-day encounters that people have had with His glory.

We also will consider what we need to do to stay in the flow of God's glory, going from glory to glory. Finally, we will conclude with the purpose of God's glory, which is the transformation of ourselves and society, so that the prayer Jesus taught us will be answered: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).