

The Lord Jesus Christ: A Series of Ten Studies

Study 10: The Lord of Glory – Part 2

taken from
Bible Studies for Enquirers and New Believers
by Vivienne Stacey

Memory Verse: John 1:14

Jesus revealed his glory not only through signs and miracles but especially in the saving events of his birth, baptism, transfiguration, agony, death, resurrection and ascension. The glory was particularly revealed through his suffering. There was glory, suffering and glory. John in John 17 records what is known as the High Priestly prayer of Jesus. Please open your Bibles to this passage which we will examine more closely.

John 17:1

"The hour is come..." Jesus from time to time spoke of his 'hour' (John 2:4; John 4:21,23; John 5:25,28; John 7:30; John 8:20; John 12:23,27; John 13:1; John 16:32; Matthew 26:45; Luke 22:14,53.) Look up all these references and list the verses that mention his 'hour' in John 17:1 Jesus was referring to his death and resurrection – the hours of his agony in Gethsemane, betrayal, crucifixion and resurrection.

John 17:4

This passage refers back to the glory in the life of our Lord. It refers not to works but to the work, to the life of obedience: "Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 2:7). His life of holiness showed forth the glory of God. There is the work that was his life and the work that was his death – both are glorious.

John 17:5

It is amazing that the glory that Jesus had before the world was made should be shown forth in something so humbling as death on a cross like a criminal. They crucified the Lord of glory (1 Corinthians 2:8). In the very fact of crucifixion the glory of God was shown – that was supremely "his hour". "We see Jesus...crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death"(Hebrews 2:9).

John 17:10

Jesus speaks of being glorified in his followers. This leads on to the second topic – glory and suffering in believers.

John 17:22

The glory of the triune God – the glory of the relationship between the Father and the eternal Son is to be shown in the oneness of Jesus' followers. We are to be partakers of the divine nature (1 Peter 1:4) and to share in the glory of the eternal Trinity.

John 17:24

This passage elaborates further on this theme. Having studied glory through suffering in the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ we now look at it in the lives of believers. There

is no mention of the Holy Spirit in John 17 but there were many references to the Holy Spirit in John 14-16. In John 17, the emphasis is on the Son and through the Son on the Father. We worship one triune God. John 17:3 is a brief creedal statement. We have seen something of the uncreated glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Now we have to learn how to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God. Sinful redeemed people are brought into the harmony of relationship that is found in the Holy Trinity: "that they may be all one, even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee" (John 17:21). See also John 17:22-23,26. It is into this fellowship that God calls us, born again by the Spirit of God, chosen before the foundation of the world. It all happens through glory, suffering and grace.

Glory through Suffering in the Lives of Believers

If you see a man or woman on whom rests the power of God, you would probably be right in saying that God has marked him or her with suffering. If we want to know in our lives something of the power and authority, beauty and love of Jesus Christ we can only experience it through suffering. There is no other way. This is the way Jesus our Master and Teacher went should not the servant and pupil follow in his steps? (1 Peter 2:21). Through suffering Jesus entered into his glory and this is the way appointed for those who follow him. We need to distinguish between the types of suffering:

- Suffering caused just because we are mortal, ordinary human beings or through our own sinfulness. It is the lot of all people to suffer in one way or another. Believers have, therefore, to show a spiritual attitude to these sufferings like illness and bereavement which come to us because we are human, living in this present world. Our testing is our attitude towards these sufferings and whether we allow God to use them creatively in our lives.
- Suffering that comes to us because we follow Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. If we want to go deeply into spiritual experience we must follow our Lord. Paul's ambition was: "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11).

In Mark 10:35-40 we read of the request of James and John to be allowed to sit on Jesus' right and left in his glory. Jesus replied: "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?" (Mark 10:38). There is only one way to enter into this glory. It is through suffering – the suffering that comes not because of our sin, not because of our humanity but only because we follow Jesus.

For the believer all suffering is creative. Our creator God intends to make all our suffering creative. If we endure it reluctantly it may not be so creative. God took the worst event – the crucifixion of Jesus – and made it creative beyond measure. He takes the worst in man and transforms it for his glory if we allow him. God takes our suffering which we find so hard now and uses it for his glory in our lives and in his kingdom. "Christ in you...the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

Suffering is not just a question of enduring. There is joy in the midst of suffering as the apostle Peter makes clear in his first letter. There is peace in the midst of conflict. There is a time for gritting your teeth, for being like Jesus who set his face to go to Jerusalem for the last time (Luke 9:51). He could not have felt joy at that point but he had peace.

In the garden of Gethsemane there was a conflict. It was a time of isolation, of loneliness beyond description. Somehow joy comes out of suffering and peace is known in conflict. The more we know of the conflict against evil the more we will know of the peace of God which passes understanding (Philippians 4:7). The more we know of suffering, the more we will know of joy. This is demonstrated by our Lord who for the joy which was set before him endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2).

According to 2 Corinthians 4:17, the affliction which we now endure for Jesus' sake is at the moment preparing for us an eternal weight of glory. At the moment the glory is being shown in and through us. The completion of the glory will be when we go to be with God in the glory of heaven. We read of three contrasts in this verse. Momentary affliction is compared with an eternal weight of glory. Light affliction is compared with a weight of glory and affliction is compared with glory.

The Greek text suggests that these three contrasting experiences are interwoven at this time in our lives – affliction and glory. We can be aware of the lightness of our momentary affliction and of the eternal weight of glory. They are happening now because God is creative. Sometimes our burdens seem very heavy. Look up Matthew 11:28-30. The burden is light. The yoke is easy. No matter how heavy the burden may in fact be it will not be heavier than God intends us to bear. It becomes light because Jesus shares it with us. We are yoked to him. He is the Lord of glory and gives grace. We often talk of our suffering as something strange but we are not to be surprised. We are to rejoice in so far as we share Christ's sufferings that we may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. "If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you" (1 Peter 4:12-14; 1 Peter 5:10).