

Where's the Glory?

School is out. Frenetic shoppers jam stores and freeways. Lines are long and tempers short. Freshly cut trees from Home Depot are hustled into dens, as ornament boxes reappear from the attic. Families gather again for the annual ritual of tree trimming as the scent of cider fills the air.

Telephone circuits and AOL are loaded with users greeting loved ones, discussing gifts and travel plans. Beachwear and ski outfits are purchased; muscles are limbered up for the physical ordeals ahead. Giving and receiving fits, having fun, eating, drinking, sporting events, parties, being together with family and friends . . . these contemporary "sugar plums" dance in our heads.

But, . . . **"Where's the glory?"** It is glory that makes the difference, and unless God somehow appears in our midst, something is missing in our celebration of Christmas. Biblical history reveals to us a chain of events through time when God has done just that—He has showed up—and when He did, somehow things were different, as His creatures sensed a measure of the **presence** of the **glory of God**. Consider this:

Glory in the Mount. Moses encountered it at Sinai in the burning bush and on the Holy Mount. The Israelites followed it out of bondage, manifesting itself as bright cloud (by day) and pillar of fire (by night). Levites and Prophets observed its awesome presence within both Tabernacle and Temple until national disobedience and spiritual decadence forced its withdrawal for four hundred years. During that time the glory of Sinai was replaced by pagan, Gentile rule: Babylon, Persia, Greece, Syria, and finally the crushing boot of Rome.

Glory in the Manger. Amidst this darkness, the glory returned once more . . . first glimpsed upon the innocent, lovely face of a newborn named, **"Immanuel,"** which means, *"God with us."* The countenance of this Child was like no other—irresistibly inviting and warm, yet mustering forth from those who beheld Him an urge to worship, to remove one's shoes as if on Holy ground. Never had the divine Presence been stronger, and those who had eyes to see, beheld the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Glory in the Messenger. This glory of the Only Begotten from the bosom of the Father was never intended in the divine plan for just a handful of first century devotees. It was meant to radiate out from the heart and soul of every follower of the Way—from *then* until *now*. Through the promise of a Comforter, each of the faithful would possess Treasure inside an earthen vessel: Christ within, the hope of glory—for time AND eternity. That glory means little unless someone is there to notice it, to behold it, to ponder it. And today there is no holy mountain, no temple, no Messiah in the flesh to manifest God's glory.

Where then is the Glory? Where can it be noticed and pondered today? An early Christian of the second century tells us: *"In my brother's face I behold the Lord."*

May it be so for you and me . . . this year.

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