

Unit 4



Glorification

The Destruction of Death and Perfection of God's People

TRUTH

by memory – 1 Corinthians 15:54 (ESV)

"When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'"

in Bible –

Last week you learned that God's plan for making you holy is sanctification. Holiness is the destination God has called you to, and sanctification is the pathway that will bring you there. You learned that sanctification has two components: purification (God's part), and consecration (your part). You also learned that consecration is not about performing a list of religious dos and don'ts. It is a lifestyle of intentionally surrendering your will to God.

This week you will learn how God will bring His plan of redemption to a conclusion in a future event theologians call *glorification*. Glorification is another work of God's grace on our behalf. Like justification and adoption, it will occur in an instant: the moment in time when "...*death is swallowed up in victory.*" (1 Corinthians 15:54). At that moment the full glory of God's people, which was lost at the Fall, will be restored.

If you use the **in Bible** scriptures in your personal worship, be sure to include the elements of **PRAISE**.

Pray First – Read the text – Ask Questions – Interpret in Context – Summarize applications – Engage with God

If you find yourself struggling with how and what to pray try following the pattern Jesus taught in the Lord's Prayer which we call the **5 Targets of Prayer**:

God's Honor God's Kingdom God's Provision God's Forgiveness God's Power

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Job 19:23-27 – The book of Job provides an Old Testament reference to the afterlife that hints that there will be a physical dimension to our conscious existence even after death.

What hint does Job give that we will still have a physical nature after we die?

Daniel 12:1-3 – The book of Daniel provides an Old Testament hint that there will be a resurrection and judgment of every person at the end of the age.

Summarize what Daniel says about a future resurrection and judgment.

Matthew 22:23-33 – In this passage a Jewish religious group that did not believe in the resurrection asked Jesus a trick question. Jesus astonished them with His answer.

When Jesus compared people’s existence in the next life with that of angels, did He mean humans would be non-physical? What do you think Jesus meant? Why? If you’re not sure, come back to this question after studying the rest of the passages.

1 Corinthians 15 – In this chapter Paul answers those in Corinth who denied the resurrection of the dead. In response to their objections, He defends the resurrection of Jesus and the *general resurrection* of the dead that will take place at the end of the age. The general resurrection is so called because all people, righteous and unrighteous alike, will be raised to appear before God’s throne and be judged. Paul’s defense and explanation of the general resurrection provides important information about how God will restore glory to His people when Jesus returns.

What hope do Christians have if there is no resurrection? How would that affect our worldview? (verses 12-19; 32)

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Because Christ has been raised, He will also be exalted over all authorities and enemies. Summarize the events surrounding the exaltation of Christ at the end of the age. (verses 20-28)

[Note: Verse 29 makes reference to the strange practice of baptizing living people on behalf of dead loved ones. It is impossible to be certain as to who practiced this rite and why. Nevertheless, you should not interpret Paul to be condoning the practice. (Neither Jesus, Paul nor any other Apostle taught it.) He is simply referencing the practice for the sake of arguing that if there is no resurrection, then he and others are wasting their energy and putting themselves in danger unnecessarily.]

Summarize Paul's description of the resurrected bodies of those who die as Christians (verses 35-49). How does this body compare with our present, fallen physical nature inherited from Adam? [Note: Paul's comparison of a "*natural body*" and "*spiritual body*" in verse 44 should not be understood as *physical* and *non-physical*. The point of the passage is that the dead will be raised and given physical bodies, albeit of a physical nature that is vastly different from our present physical nature.]

Summarize what will happen to Christians who are alive when Christ returns (verses 50-54).

2 Corinthians 4:7-18 – Here Paul explains how the hope of the resurrection and the glory it will bring impacted his outlook on life.

How did the hope of the resurrection and the hope of glory impact Paul's worldview and the way he lived his life?

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to summarize –

John Owen was born in 1616, five years after the completion of a new English translation of the Scriptures authorized by King James I of England. Owen experienced a remarkable conversion to Christ in his early twenties, later becoming a respected pastor, chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, and eventually Dean of Christ Church, Oxford. He was highly regarded during his time as a champion of the doctrines handed down by European Reformers such as Luther and Calvin. Today he is widely hailed as England's greatest Puritan theologian on a par with America's Jonathan Edwards. One might think that so respected and accomplished a man might have lived in relative ease and comfort, and died a peaceful death. Not so. Owen's life was plagued by sorrows on a scale that few today can comprehend. He fathered 11 children all but one of whom died in childhood, and eventually buried Mary, his wife of 32 years. His own life ended after suffering years of painful illness at age 67.

Think about this: Why would someone who buried 10 of his own children continue to trust God? Hadn't God failed him? Put yourself in Owen's place. When life seems so cruel and unfair, why would you trust God and endure?

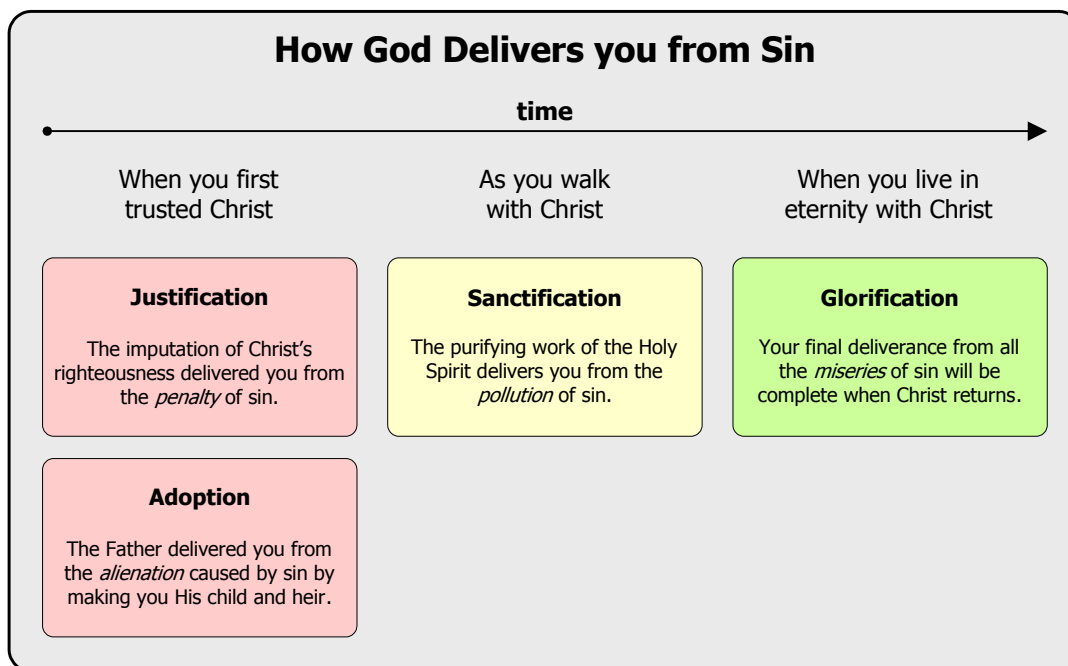
Surely, part of the bedrock that anchored John Owen's trust in God was His promise that He would one day wipe away all his grief and suffering and replace them with incomparable glory. He believed that God promised something far better than this present life to those who endured to the end. He was much like the heroes of faith chronicled in Hebrews 11. Like them he died, "*...not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar...*" (11:13) John Owen believed that God would grant everlasting glory to the faithful. And so he remained until the end.

Do you understand the glory that awaits God's people? Do you long for it? Is it an anchor for your soul? The restoration of God's glory – *glorification* – is the final, consummate step in God's plan to perfect His people and deliver them from sin. (See the chart on the next page). At that time Christ will finally be exalted above every power and authority. All the remaining power of sin will be broken. The enemies of God will be judged. Death will be destroyed. God's curse will be lifted. Heaven and earth will be renewed and God's people will be perfected in the image of Christ in righteousness, glory and physical immortality.

You may be questioning the phrase *physical immortality*. Perhaps you think being physical means to be mortal. Perhaps you think that the next life will be a purely spiritual, non-physical existence like the angels* of God. But think about how God created humanity. From the beginning Adam was designed to be an immortal, spiritual *and* physical being. Only after he sinned did his physical being become

*In Matthew 22:23-33, when Jesus compared human existence after death to that of angels, He was not implying that humans would be non-physical beings in the next life. He was stating that marriage would not exist because, like the angels, men and women would not have reproductive relationships.

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mortal. Had he not sinned, the world would have been filled with his immortal descendants, clothed with the glory of God and enjoying His fellowship. God's plan has not changed and He intends to redeem His people's spirit and body. This means that the transition from a physical to spiritual existence at death is not the end of your transformation into Christ's image. Ultimately God plans to cloth His people in glorious, immortal, physical bodies. Job gave us a hint of this when he said, "...after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God." (Job 19:26)

How will this happen? Paul provides the answer in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4. When Christ returns to earth in glory and power there will be a nearly simultaneous resurrection of those who have died in Christ, and a rapture of Christ's followers who are still alive. And so His people "...shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye..." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). From Paul's accounts of our transformation at the end of the age, we can piece together this sequence of events:

- Christ will return in glory accompanied by the spirits of His followers who have died before His coming. (1 Thessalonians 4:14)
- He will resurrect new bodies from the dust of the earth reuniting them with the spirits of those who attend Him at His coming. (1 Thessalonians 4:16)
- The bodies of Christ's living followers will be transformed and lifted up to meet Christ and His entourage in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 15:52-53)

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These passages as well as Paul's reference to "*the redemption of our bodies*" in Romans 8:23 make it clear that our ultimate state of existence in eternity will be in some sense *physical*. Yet obviously, such resurrected and transformed bodies would not be of the *same* physical nature ("*flesh and blood*" Paul calls it in 1 Corinthians 15:50) as we have now. So, what will our transformed bodies be like?

- They will be renewed in the image of God, clothed in God's shining glory as was Adam's before the fall. (1 Corinthians 15:43, 48-49; compare with Psalm 8:5)
- They will be much like Christ's glorious body. (Philippians 3:21)
- They will be human in form. They will enjoy sight, sound, touch, smell and taste. They will be able to enjoy food and drink, yet cannot starve.
- They will still be personally recognizable as "us", just as Jesus was recognized by His disciples after His resurrection.
- They will be complete and without flaw, appearing in youthful beauty and functioning as strongly and as intelligently as God designed them.
- They will be immortal and imperishable, neither aging nor subject to weakness, disease, injury, pain nor decay. (1 Corinthians 15:42-43, 53-54)
- They will not be subject to any of the ravages of sin. There will be no more temptations of the flesh, nor any other lingering effects of sin.

What a great hope you have in Christ – the hope of full glory! God has done it all for you so that all that Adam lost will be restored to you in Christ. When He returns, truly "*...death will be swallowed up [i.e. devoured and destroyed] in victory*" (1 Corinthians 15:54).

The hope of glory has three significant applications that should shape your worldview. First, if you find yourself in unusual suffering or difficulty, let the hope of God's promise comfort you and sharpen your focus on eternity as it did Paul and John Owen. "*Do not lose heart...for this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison...*" (2 Corinthians 4:16-17). What God has in store for you is designed to be so magnificent that it will inspire an eternity of joy in you and praise to Him. Never release this hope. Meditate on it. Wrap your heart around it. Keep it as an anchor for your soul.

On the other hand, if you find yourself enjoying significant prosperity and blessing, don't let earthly comforts satisfy you. Beware of the spiritual danger this brings. A prosperous, secular-minded society thinks little of the hope of eternal glory. But earthly prosperity is transient; it fades away leaving nothing of eternal value. Don't let comforts and luxuries woo you to spiritual sleep so that you no longer yearn for a better life in a better world.

Finally, whatever your station in life, whatever your health or experiences, remember that you belong to another world. In Jesus, who is your hope and life, you have seen it from afar. Walk faithfully with the God who holds out the promise of glory to you. Live as His ambassador to this world and "*...be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain*" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

The subject of glorification links together the biblical doctrines of salvation (some of which were discussed in the last three weeks of *The Journey*) and the doctrines of last things. You were introduced to the Rapture this week, the moment when living Christians will be transformed and meet Jesus in the air. So, what happens next? Do we soar off to heaven, or come back down to earth? You'll explore this question and others next week when you study the Rapture and the Tribulation.

MISSION – DIALOGUING

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..." (Romans 1:16, ESV)

Remember that the Christian's mission is to take up Christ's mission to make His gospel known through word and deed. During this section of *The Journey* you are focusing on an approach to sharing the message of the gospel in a non-threatening, conversational way. At the same time, don't forget to continue the daily habit of praying for people on your prayer list and to be involved serving the least and lost across the street, track and ocean however God gives you opportunity.

So far in this series you have learned a conversational approach to introducing The Answer and the *Life Issues* booklets. See if you can repeat the outlines here.

Introducing The Answer

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Introducing the *Life Issues* booklets

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The *Life Issues* booklets are effective "CliffNotes"/"SparkNotes" type tools for investigating the big questions about Christ and Christianity that most people would want to resolve during such an investigation. Each booklet investigates a critical issue of the Christian faith in a simple, straight forward manner, and also contains several chapters of the Gospel of John. The goal is to assist a person in investigating their questions about the Christian faith, while at the same time exposing them to the life of Christ described in God's Word. Thus, these booklets rely on the spiritual power and intellectual credibility of God's Word to convert the seeking soul.

When you offer these booklets, suggest that the person read one at a time and afterwards meet with you to discuss any questions s/he may have. Reassure him or her that there will be no arm twisting. You should also encourage him or her to read a little bit of the chapters in John daily, rather than all

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