

M I S A I M I N G S

“Who concerning the Truth Have Misaimed” — 2 Timothy 2:18

Misaiming concerning the Meaning of Glory

Misaiming: “In the context of Scripture, [glory] designates life-giving power, welling up in the heart of God. Inexhaustible and immeasurable, glory fills and vivifies the earth and all that is in it” (Boogaart, Thomas A. “The Christ Tree.” *Perspective*, Dec. 1997, p. 13).

Truth: This vague description misaims in defining glory as an infinite life force which pantheistically and impersonally permeates all of creation. There is “no context of Scripture” which corroborates such an interpretation. *Glory* is a profound term in the Bible which admittedly seems to elude concise definition. We must therefore look to its context in Scripture for reliable clarification. John 1:14 tells us that when Christ came, the disciples “beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father.” Glory must then be related to the coming of Christ and His dwelling among men. This verse is generally assumed to refer in particular to the Lord’s transfiguration in Matthew chapter seventeen where “His face shined like the sun” (v. 2). Here, however, the significance of the glory is not primarily the visible radiance of splendor, but rather the manifestation of the intrinsic divinity which was concealed within this God-man. For a moment the disciples beheld the divine life of the Father expressed in the Son, through and in spite of the veil of His flesh. Luke 9:32, referring to this moment, reports that Peter and the others “saw His glory.” Peter confirms this interpretation by declaring that Christ there “received from God the Father honor and glory” (2 Pet. 1:17). Hence, according to this scriptural context, the unveiling of the divine life and power in Christ was identified as glory. Peter also refers to the manifestation of God through the overshadowing cloud following Christ’s transfiguration (Luke 9:34-35) as “the magnificent glory” (2 Pet. 1:17).

Furthermore, Peter testified that he, James, and John “became eyewitnesses of that One’s majesty” (2 Pet. 1:16). Darby’s note in his New Translation says that they were “‘admitted into immediate vision of the glory,’ a word used for full initiation into the mysteries” (1475, note f). In other words, God the Son’s expression in glory was communicated to His believers not merely for their admiration but, even the more, for

their participation. In John 17:22 Christ expressed to the Father this desire to include His disciples in His glory: “And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them.” The Son glorified the Father on earth throughout His life by expressing Him (v. 4), and now through resurrection the Father intends to glorify the Son by unveiling and manifesting the Son in the believers.

How is this so? When God was incarnated and lived in Christ, He was expressed in Christ. When Christ comes into the believer, He is likewise expressed through man’s transformed soul which produces the glory spoken of in 2 Corinthians 3:18. Our lifelong transformation into His image is from one degree of glory to another. In other words, by His inward organic work within our souls, we can express God in increasing degrees, gradually obtaining His image, His expression. Glory is thus clearly and consistently identified in the context of Scripture as God in His expression, in His visible image, both in the Father and the Son, and consummately in His transformed believers.

Misaiming concerning the Great Tree in Matthew 13

Misaiming: “Perhaps this Christmas we can look at our tree in a new way. Perhaps we can see there mirrored the Christ who is the vine in whom we are to abide; the church that is to grow and provide space for the birds of the air; and a human race that is to fill the earth with all good things for all the animals” (Boogaart, Thomas A. “The Christ Tree.” *Perspective*, Dec. 1997, p. 17).

Truth: This quotation misaims in its positive interpretation of the prophetic parable of the great tree in Matthew 13:31-32. The immediate context of this parable is not at all positive; it is surrounded by three other prophetic parables of negative tone. The preceding parables emphasize poor earth (vv. 3-23), the counterfeit seed, and tares (vv. 24-30). Likewise, the parable immediately following this one warns of leaven hidden in the fine meal (v. 33), leaven always bearing a negative connotation in the Bible. Sandwiched between these warnings is the parable of the small mustard seed which becomes a great tree for the birds to lodge in.

Like the wheat in the preceding parables, the mustard

seed is meant for food, revealing God's primary intention for His kingdom people: that they become food for the satisfaction of God and man. However, this parable indicates that both the nature and the function of this small herb have mutated. Instead of becoming a small bush to supply nourishment, it has grown into a great tree and a lodging place for birds. This mutation is a violation of the natural law of God's creation which ordains that every plant and animal procreate after their own kind. Spiritually speaking, this particular aberration was fulfilled in the early fourth century when Constantine the Great bribed thousands of pagans to be baptized, thus marrying the church to the world. This eventually transmuted the genuine church into the great, overgrown mixture of Christendom.

In addition, while trees are perennials, the mustard seed is an annual herb, signifying that the church has a heavenly and spiritual nature and is therefore only sojourning on this earth. But when the nature of the church was compromised by its marriage to the world, it became deeply rooted and settled in the earth like a perennial tree. Through the Dark Ages it flourished through its extensive commercial and political enterprises, and its "branches" became roosts for many evil persons and things. The birds here surely represent Satan, evil spirits, and evil persons motivated by them, as the Lord clearly indicates in verses 4 and 19. Therefore, becoming a great tree to "provide space for the birds of the air" should not be an aspiration. Rather, the church is called to remain heavenly and spiritual, simply sojourning on earth while seeking to satisfy God and nourish man with Christ as the bread of life.

Misaiming concerning the Judgment Seat of Christ

Misaiming: "God intends to evaluate our lives as Christians and share the information with us....A review of our lives as believers, with praise, not rebuke, as the main objective, is the purpose of the Bema [judgment seat]. "Question & Answer." *Today in the Word*, February 1997, pp. 12-13).

Truth: This passage does the reader a grave disservice by diminishing the seriousness of the judgment seat of Christ and minimizing the possibility of receiving discipline at it. It strongly implies that Christ, at His judgment, will mainly praise His believers and perhaps, at worst, slap some on the wrist in discipline. In contrast to the quotation cited above, the apostle Paul clearly sounds a stern and frank warning intended to intensify the sobriety with which we view our faithfulness to Christ in our Christian living. Our impending appearance at Christ's judgment seat should indeed serve as a warning to us, and the possibility that we will receive rebuke and discipline at it must not be diluted.

To understand the judgment seat of Christ, a clear distinction must be drawn between the free gift of eternal life and the reward of the kingdom. The free gift of salvation and eternal security are not in question at the judgment seat of Christ. Eternal life is freely given to all believers and not earned (Rom. 6:23). Eternal life is not the reward or praise given in compensation for the Christian's faithful service, but rather the free gift of God graciously bestowed on the repentant, believing sinner. Christ's believers will never appear before the great white throne of God (Rev. 20:11), a final judgment reserved for unbelievers at the threshold of eternity. The judgment seat of Christ is different from the great white throne of God and will be established at His return, at the dawn of the millennial kingdom, in order for Christ to determine who among His believers is qualified to reign with Him during the thousand years of the kingdom age. Hence, this judgment has everything to do with His righteous recompense for the believer's faithfulness in service and living during the church age.

It is a very real and sobering possibility that genuine believers will be rebuked and disciplined at the judgment seat of Christ, for it is, after all, a seat of "judgment" and not simply of reward. While His overcoming believers will deservedly receive "praise... from God" (1 Cor. 4:5b) and be rewarded with the millennial kingdom and the wedding feast of the Lamb (Matt. 25:10, 21), defeated believers will "suffer loss," while they themselves "will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:15). These believers will not enter Christ's wedding feast but will instead be sent to "buy oil" in order to make up their shortage. They will be "cast...into the outer darkness" for the duration of the millennial kingdom with anguished and remorseful "weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 24:51; 25:30).

The Lord wisely offers not only His kingdom reward and His wedding feast as an incentive to all believers to overcome in this age but also discloses the possibility of discipline as a warning to compromised believers. While He undoubtedly "wants to commend" all His believers for having overcome, as a righteous God He cannot praise the unpraiseworthy or reward the uncommendable. To portray the judgment seat as otherwise condones and fosters a Christian living and walk that is complacently passive in its pursuit of Christ. Thus, ironically, those expecting unconditional praise are far less likely to find it than those whose Christian walk is governed by a healthy and reverent fear of the judgment seat of Christ.

by the Editors