

THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE GLORIFICATION OF THE BELIEVERS

by Witness Lee

If we would appreciate and experience God's complete salvation in Christ, we need to have a clear view of the divine revelation concerning the glory of God and the glorification of the believers. In the following article, composed of excerpts from his ministry on this subject,¹ Witness Lee presents the essential truth regarding God's eternal glory and our eventual glorification as the culmination of our experience of God's salvation. May God's chosen and redeemed people be enlightened to see that the glory of God in the face of Christ will one day become the glory shining out of us for the corporate expression of the Triune God—God's eternal purpose according to His good pleasure. —*The Editors*

The Glory of God

A marvelous attribute of God is glory. Acts 7:2 says, "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham." Acts 7:55 says, Stephen "looked intently into heaven and saw the glory of God." Glory is the expression of God, God expressed in splendor. God's glory was a great attraction to Abraham, separating him from the world unto God. God's glory was also a great encouragement and strength, enabling Abraham to follow God (Gen. 12:1, 4).

Second Peter 1:3 says that God has called us to, or by, His own glory. Furthermore, 1 Peter 5:10 says that God has called us into His eternal glory. According to 2 Timothy 2:10, God's salvation is with eternal glory. This indicates that eternal glory is the ultimate goal of God's salvation (Rom. 8:21). God's salvation leads us into His glory (Heb. 2:10).

In the Gospel of John we read that the Word, who was God, became flesh and tabernacled among us, and that we beheld His glory (John 1:1, 14). John 1:18 goes on to say, "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." There is glory in the declaration of God. When we see God, we see glory.

Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Man was made by God in His image in order that man may express Him for His glory. But man sinned. Now instead of expressing God, man expresses sin and his sinful self. Therefore, man is short of God's glory. Nevertheless, we have been ordained for God's glory and called to it (1 Cor. 2:7; 1 Thes. 2:12). As believers, we are being transformed into this glory (2 Cor. 3:18) and shall be brought into it (Heb. 2:10). Eventually we shall be glorified with Christ (Rom. 8:17, 30) to bear the glory of God for God's expression in the New Jerusalem.

We have been ordained for God's glory and called to it. As believers, we are being transformed into this glory and shall be brought into it. Eventually we shall be glorified with Christ to bear the glory of God for God's expression in the New Jerusalem.

Romans 9:23 says, "In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory." God created us as His vessels to contain Him and express Him. God makes known the riches of His glory upon us, His vessels, which He has prepared unto glory. We were predestinated by His sovereignty to be His containers, vessels of honor, to express what He is in glory. This will be fully revealed in the New Jerusalem.

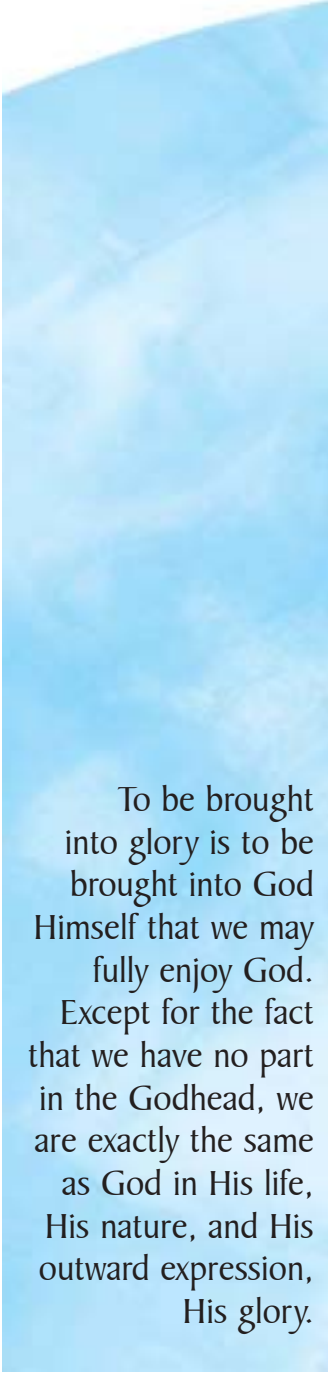
An outstanding feature of the New Jerusalem is that it has the glory of God (Rev. 21:11), His expression. The entire city of New Jerusalem will bear the glory of God, which is God Himself shining out through the city. Actually, the glory of God will be the content of the New Jerusalem, for this city will be completely filled with His glory. This indicates that the city is a vessel to contain God and express Him. The glory of God is actually God Himself being manifested. The fact that the New Jerusalem is full of God's glory means that God is manifested in this city. The church life today should also have God's glory, manifesting and expressing Him in this marvelous divine attribute.

The Glorification of the Believers

God's desire and His intention are to be man's life. The central thought of God is that He be one with man; He wants to be everything to man that He might fulfill His plan. Therefore, He Himself became a man through incarnation to accomplish redemption. Then He entered into resurrection and released His divine life. In His resurrection He became a life-giving Spirit. This life-giving Spirit comes into us and regenerates us. After He regenerates us, He dwells in our spirit, and from that time on He wants to spread out daily from our spirit. He wants to permeate all the parts of our soul, including our mind, emotion, and will, and thus transform our whole being into God: our mind transformed into God's mind, our emotion transformed into God's emotion, and our will transformed into God's will. Thus, we become God-men. But there remains a part of us which is still not transformed, and that is our body. After we are saved, the part that is the most troublesome to us today is our body, and this is the part that is the most difficult to deal with.

However, the Lord has given us a promise, and this promise is that He will come to transfigure our body. This is the third part of transformation, which is to bring our body into glory. Glory is God expressed. Therefore, to be brought into glory is to be brought into God Himself that we may fully enjoy God. This is the peak, the consummation, of transformation, in which we are transformed to such a degree that we are the same as God. Except for the fact that we have no part in God's person, that is, the Godhead, we are exactly the same as God in His life, His nature, and His outward expression, His glory. This is clearly revealed in God's holy Word.

Today God is a mystery in us, and in the future this mystery will be the glory. God is in our spirit, and our spirit is full of God. The God who is in our spirit is permeating our soul daily, spreading out from our spirit day by day. He does not reason with us. When we agree, He comes; even when we disagree, He comes. He is not only permeating our whole being but is also spreading outward from our spirit. The God who indwells us does not reason with us. He is the only One who is; we are not. We must decrease, and He must increase. Not only so, after He comes, He would not let us go; He wants us to stay with Him. God is in our spirit, and every day He also works to occupy our mind, our emotion, and our will. He is within every part of our being. Therefore, we have a hymn that says, "Thy Spirit, Lord, in mine, I pray, / O'erflow my being as a flood, / That every part with glory shine / And everywhere be Thee and God" (*Hymns*, #489, stanza 8). This means that we have God in our spirit, and our entire soul is also occupied by God. Hence, we are God-men. What we still lack today is the transfiguration of our body. However, we have a glorious hope, that is, that one day He will come to transfigure our body so that we may enter into God fully. Then from the inside to the outside we will have the life of God, the nature of God, and the glorious expression of God. Moreover,



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we will be in God. This is the central revelation of the holy Scriptures.

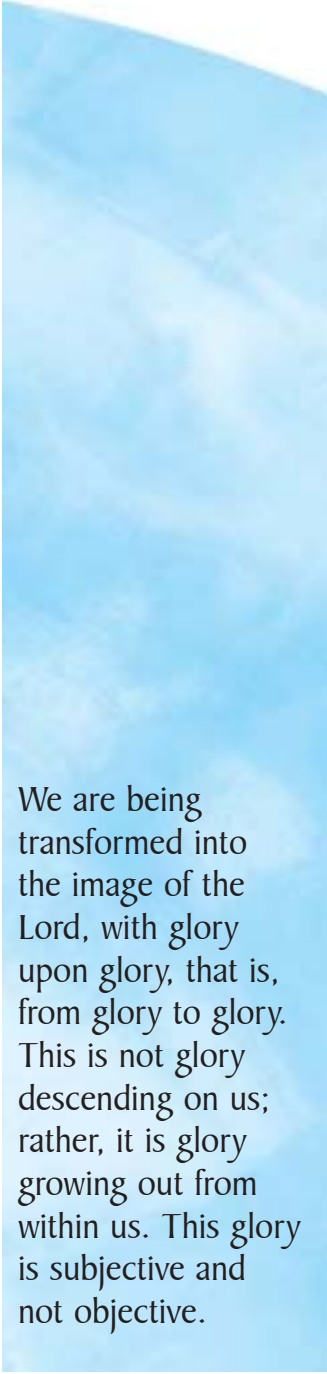
The first step of God's salvation in life is to regenerate us. The second step is to transform us in our soul. The third step is that He will conform us from within to the image of God's firstborn Son. This firstborn Son of God is mysterious. He was God, who came into humanity, put on humanity, and died on the cross to terminate everything negative and release His life. Then He resurrected and became a life-giving Spirit. This life-giving Spirit now comes into us. He is the firstborn Son of God, and God is conforming us to the image of this firstborn Son of God. In God's firstborn Son there is God and there is also man; there is death and there is also the effectiveness of death; there is resurrection and there is also the power of resurrection. He has everything in Him. This all-inclusive One now lives in us. Do we want God? He is here. Do we want uplifted humanity? It is also here. We who have God and allow God to transform us within are truly the men above all men. Not only do we have God, but we also have the uplifted humanity. Every believer is a Christ-man, and a Christ-man is a God-man. In our spirit is God, and in our soul—our mind, emotion, and will—is God. Our whole being is God. Now we are waiting for the fourth step of God's salvation in life, that is, the transfiguration and glorification of our body.

The Definition of Glorification

Objectively, glorification is that the redeemed believers will be brought into the glory of God to participate in the glory of God (Heb. 2:10a; 1 Pet. 5:10a). This is the objective definition of glorification. It seems that today the glory of God is far away in the heavens, and we, the redeemed ones, are here on the earth; there is a great distance separating the two. Sometimes we feel that we are very far away from the glory of God, but this kind of feeling is only partially accurate.

Subjectively, glorification is that the matured believers will manifest from within them, by their maturity in life, the glory of God as the element of their maturity in life (Rom. 8:17-18, 21; 2 Cor. 4:17). This is the subjective definition of glorification. We may use an example to illustrate subjective glorification. When a flower in the garden begins to grow, it is just a little green tender sprout. The more it grows, however, the more mature it becomes. Gradually flower buds begin to appear. If you continue to water the plant, it will grow more. After a while the plant will blossom. When the flowers are in full bloom, that is the glorification. The glory of the flowers does not come from without; rather, it grows out from within. Therefore, on the one hand, we have a hope of glory in that Christ is coming to glorify us. This is objective. On the other hand, we are being transformed into the image of the Lord, with glory upon glory, that is, from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18). This is not glory descending on us; rather, it is glory growing out from within us. In springtime when all kinds of flowers are blooming, none of these beautiful flowers descend on the stems from the outside. Rather, they grow out from within the plant itself. If you are a lover of the Lord, and if you let the Lord live in you and you live by the Lord, then when people observe you, they will see the glory of God upon you. This glory is subjective and not objective.

Our entering into glory consists of these two aspects of glorification. Suppose you do not live by the Lord, and you do not live Christ. You simply do whatever you like, and in whatever you do, although big sins are rare, small sins are frequent. If you are such a Christian, you can freely lose your temper or give others an angry stare at home, and no one in the church is able to deal with you. If you are such a person, there is no glory of the Lord upon you, and there is no glory of God at all to be seen in you. Yet you say that when Christ comes, you will be glorified and you will enter into glory. Let me tell you this: Yes, you will enter into glory when Christ returns, but that glory will be only a tiny bit of glory. Therefore, in 1 Corinthians 15:41 the apostle Paul said, "There is another glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory



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of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.” How can the glory of the star be compared with the glory of the sun or of the moon? I am afraid that at the Lord’s coming, Paul’s glory will be great, and you will be just a tiny star that can hardly be seen. Will you be glorious there? You will not be glorious there in glory.

Today if you love the Lord, and you live out the Lord’s glory from within you, then at the Lord’s coming, He will place you in a glory of the highest degree. But if you still behave in your old way—staring at others angrily, gossiping, criticizing at will, and though rarely committing big sins, you are frequently committing small sins—do you think you will be as glorious as the apostle Paul when the Lord comes back? Glory is given by the Lord, but the degree of glory must be established by you. There is also a class of people who are defeated and will not enter into glory. They will go into a darkness where they will be gnashing their teeth.

Today the Lord has given us gifts, and He wants us to apply the gifts and minister them to others. Nevertheless, many of us live carelessly on the earth and do not use our gifts. The Lord said that when He comes back, we will have to give an account before Him. At that time He may say to us, “Evil and slothful slave, be cast into the outer darkness” (Matt. 25:26-30). Therefore, there are two sides to this matter. Today pitiful Christianity teaches people only one side, telling people that once you believe in Jesus, His precious blood bears the full responsibility, and you are forgiven of all your sins. This is not wrong. However, the Lord Jesus forgives your sins in order that you may live in His life. If you do not live in His life, He will still need to deal with you, even though He has already forgiven you. He will settle the account with you at His coming back. This is clearly taught in the holy Scriptures.

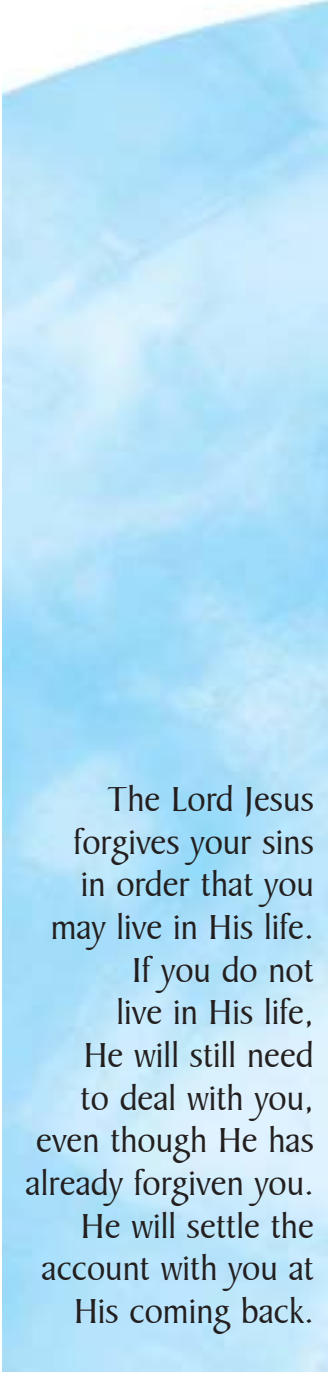
Furthermore, 2 Corinthians 4:17 tells us that the momentary lightness of affliction which we suffer now for the Lord is working out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory. Today if we endure sufferings for the Lord, this will increase the weight of glory that we will receive from the Lord. Romans 8:17 also says that if we suffer with the Lord, we will also be glorified with Him. These all prove that the degree of glory we are to receive in the future is built up by us today.

We thank the Lord that we have been regenerated. We have Him in us as our life and our supply. We daily receive from Him the supply for us to be metabolically transformed. Our being transformed in this way every day is our growth in life. And our growth in life is the building up of the degree of our glorification. If we have not been living out the glory of the Lord on the earth, how can we expect that He will suddenly put His glory upon us at His coming back? Therefore, today if we are living out God on the earth, God becomes the glory upon us. When the Lord comes back, He will say, “Well done, good and faithful slave....Enter into the joy of your master” (Matt. 25:23). This is to enter into glory.

What the Lord wants for us is to live Him out. He wants us to live Him out in difficult situations, and He wants us to live Him out also in smooth situations. The apostle Paul said, “For to me, to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21a). He also said, “According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death” (v. 20). This magnification is the glory.

The Real Significance of the Glory of God

What is the glory of God? The glory of God is God Himself (Jer. 2:11), and the manifestation of God is the glory of God (Acts 7:2). When you live out God, that is the glory of God. That is the glory which grows out from the growth in life. The blooming of beautiful flowers does not come from above. Instead, it grows metabolically out from the elements of life within.



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The Reality of the Believers' Glorification

The reality of the believers' glorification is their gaining of God Himself. Without God, we do not have glory. When we gain God, we are glorified. The measure of God that we have determines the measure of our glory. The believers' entering into the glory of God to participate in the glory of God is their entering into God Himself to enjoy God Himself. God does not give us great glory objectively merely for us to make a display. God manifests Himself in us that we may enjoy Him. The more we enjoy God and the more God we have in us, the more we have His glory. The more we enjoy God, the more we are full of glory. Regardless of whether you are young or old, rich or poor, as long as you enjoy God and experience God, you are glorious in the eyes of others. To you, you are simply enjoying God. To others, however, you are manifesting the glory of God. You are glorifying God, and God is expressed through you.


The believers' being transformed in the divine life today is God's being expressed in the believers as glory; hence, this daily transformation is from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18b). The practical, subjective glory of God in us is a glory that progresses from one degree to another degree. This expressing of God is progressive and advancing; hence, it is from glory to glory.

The consummation of glory into which the believers will enter by transformation in life is that they will be glorified—their body will be redeemed, and they will thereby enter into the glory of God to fully enjoy God as glory (Rom. 8:21, 23, 30). The ultimate result of the believers' transformation in life is that they gain God and enjoy God. This is the principle today, and it will be the same principle in the future.

Glorification Being the Ultimate Consummation of God's Salvation in Life

Glorification is the ultimate consummation of God's salvation in life. It is God's salvation in life saving us to the uttermost through regeneration, transformation, conformation, and glorification. The believers' arriving at glorification is the climax of their maturity in the life of God, the climax of God's salvation in life.

The Believers' Glorification Being the Accomplishment of God's Economy for the Satisfaction of God's Desire

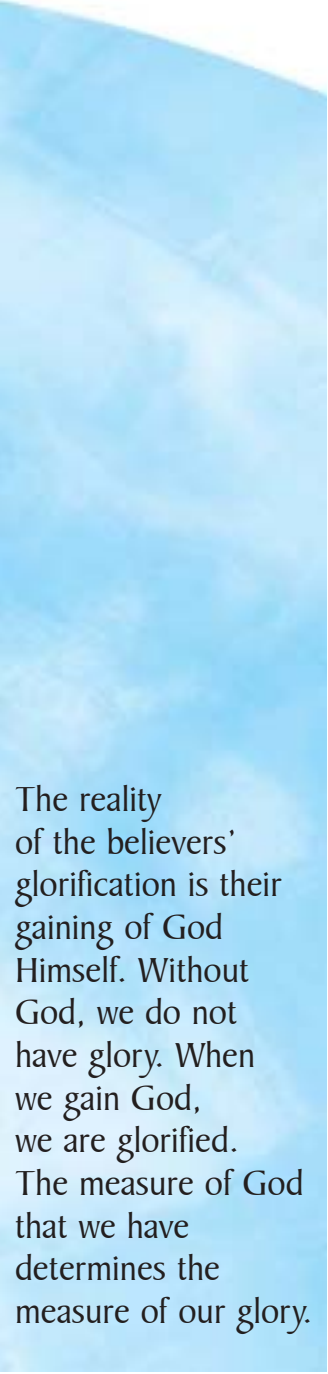
With regard to God, the believers' glorification is the accomplishment of God's economy for the satisfaction of God's desire. The full expression of the believers' glorification is the New Jerusalem, which will be manifested in glory (Rev. 21:10-11). The New Jerusalem is the ultimate glory. The New Jerusalem will be constituted with the glory of God to be the expression of God. This is the full expression in eternity of God's becoming a man in humanity and man's being conformed to God in divinity. God is expressed in humanity, and man is expressed in divinity. The greatest corporate expression of God's becoming man and man's being conformed to God is the New Jerusalem. This is what God desires and is His heart's delight, and this is also what God is waiting for in His good pleasure. We hope for this, and God also hopes for this. 

Notes

¹The sources for this article include *Salvation in Life* and *The Conclusion of the New Testament*, Messages 1-20, both published by Living Stream Ministry.

Works Cited

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Glory and God's Purpose

"...the God of all grace, He who has called you into His eternal glory in Christ Jesus" (1 Pet. 5:10). God's purpose in calling us in Christ Jesus and in giving us all grace is that we may enjoy His eternal glory. In eternity past He predestinated us according to His foreknowledge, and in time He called us and justified us that we may be glorified (Rom. 8:29-30). This will be fulfilled when the Lord comes again. At that time we shall "be manifested...in glory" (Col. 3:4) together with Christ, who is our life today, and shall enjoy "the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). Our sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with "the coming glory to be revealed upon us" (v. 18), that is, God's own glory (1 Thes. 2:12).

Glory and God's Leading

"...Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory" (Heb. 2:10). Since God predestined that we should enjoy His own eternal glory, beginning from the day of our salvation, He leads us into His glory. As the Creator of all things, He orders and arranges all things, causing them to work for us (Rom. 8:28-30), that through them He may lead us into His glory.

Glory and God's Perfecting

"Our momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). Here we see that the affliction which we suffer today for being Christians, for following the Lord, and for witnessing for Him is momentary and light. Our momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory. The working out of this affliction is God's perfecting work. Through affliction, God perfects us to enjoy the coming weight of glory. We suffer together with Him that we also may be glorified together with Him. Through all the things created and ordered by Him, God leads us into His glory; through afflictions, or sufferings, God perfects us to enjoy His incomparable glory.

Glory and the Believers' Enjoyment

"What are the riches of the glory of this mystery...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Although we who believe into Christ have not yet entered into the glory which God predestined for us, we do have Christ in us as the hope of glory. This is a mysterious glory with tremendous riches.

"When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory" (3:4). Today we enjoy Christ as our life. When He is manifested, we will be manifested with Him in His glory to enjoy His divine glory. That glory will free us from the slavery which the corrupted creation is under today. It is not only a glory which we desire to enjoy, but also a glory that the whole creation is eagerly expecting (Rom. 8:19-21). Today, that glory is the Christ who is in us, growing in us continually. When Christ comes, on the one hand, it is God who will lead us into that glory, and on the other hand, it is Christ who will permeate through us as the glory into which we will enter. This is Christ being glorified and marveled at in His saints (2 Thes. 1:10), that is, Christ being manifested from within His believers and upon His believers as glory and as their enjoyment. In the future, our bodies will be permeated by the glory of Christ to manifest His glory; that is, our bodies will be redeemed in the life of Christ and conformed to His glorious body. We will then put off our bodies of the old creation and be freed from the slavery which both we and the corrupted creation are under, that we may enter into the freedom of the glory of the children of God to enjoy God's eternal glory.

The Hope of Glory
~Christ in Me ~

- 1 Myst'ry hid from ages now revealed to me,
'Tis the Christ of God's reality.
He embodies God, and He is life to me,
And the glory of my hope He'll be.
Glory, glory, Christ is life in me!
Glory, glory, what a hope is He!
Now within my spirit He's the mystery!
Then the glory He will be to me.
- 2 In my spirit He regenerated me,
In my soul He's now transforming me.
He will change my body like unto His own,
Wholly making me the same as He.
- 3 Now in life and nature He is one with me;
Then in Him, the glory, I will be;
I'll enjoy His presence for eternity
With Him in complete conformity. (*Hymns, #948*)

The Hope of Glory
~ Christ as the Glorification ~

- 1 Christ is the hope of glory, my very life is He,
He has regenerated and saturated me;
He comes to change my body by His subduing might
Like to His glorious body in glory bright!
He comes, He comes, Christ comes to glorify me!
My body He'll transfigure, like His own it then will be.
He comes, He comes, redemption to apply!
As Hope of glory He will come, His saints to glorify.
- 2 Christ is the hope of glory, He is God's mystery;
He shares with me God's fulness and brings God into me.
He comes to make me blended with God in every way,
That I may share His glory with Him for aye.
- 3 Christ is the hope of glory, redemption full is He:
Redemption to my body, from death to set it free,
He comes to make my body a glorious one to be
And swallow death forever in victory.
- 4 Christ is the hope of glory, He is my history:
His life is my experience, for He is one with me;
He comes to bring me into His glorious liberty,
That one with Him completely I'll ever be. (*Hymns, #949*)

teaching and
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