

I. SERIES INTRODUCTION:

A. The Carols of Christmas: Gazing on the Beauty of Jesus Christ

1. Can you imagine Christmas without the songs of Christmas? The carols, the hymns, the choruses. It's not a surprise that there are glorious songs surrounding the birth of Jesus.
2. The songs of Christmas celebrate the appearing of Jesus Christ.
3. There is something mysterious, majestic, paradoxical, surprising, and heart-warming about the fact that the Son of God is born among men.

B. O Come All Ye Faithful. The tune is thought to have been written around the 1700's.

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant, O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem. Come and behold Him, born the King of angels; O come, let us adore Him (3x), Christ the Lord.

1. "Come and behold Him." It's an invitation to come and behold Jesus.

C. That's the majesty and beauty of the day on which Jesus was born. Christmas is unique in that ordinary people (shepherds, children, seniors, people from all walks of life), not just prophets, priests, and seers were able to look upon the face of the Son of God. They could go to Bethlehem and see Jesus. It's an historic event on a cosmic scale.

1. God with us, Emmanuel. What does this mean for humanity? For heaven? For all of eternity?
2. What does God's face look like? Does He smile? Is He handsome? Is He Cute? Does He cry?

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. (2 Corinthians 4:6-7)

3. In the face of Jesus Christ, we are given the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

II. ENCOUNTERING THE LIGHT OF HIS FACE

A. What does Jesus' face look like? Those who have seen Him describe it as light.

...and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. (Revelation 1:16) And He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. (Matthew 17:2)

His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude. (Daniel 10:6)

1. 2 Cor. 3-4 describes how Moses' face was shining after He encountered God. They would place a veil over His face because it faded after some time.
 2. The glory of the New Covenant described as the ministry of the Spirit in 2 Cor 3 is that Jesus' glory does not fade.
- B. What does the appearance of His face say about who Jesus is and what He is like?

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

1. Jesus is full of grace and truth. There is no falsehood in Him, no evil, no deceit. Only grace, truth, purity.

III. THE DESIRE OF JESUS FOR HIS BRIDE

- A. Jesus desires that we behold His glory. In this final prayer time before going to the cross, Jesus expresses His desire. This is the desire of God that we see unfolding throughout history.

“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.²⁵ O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.²⁶ And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17:24-26)

1. God wants to share the most glorious thing He has – Himself in the person of His Son, in all His glory and love.
2. To those who would look upon Jesus and open their hearts to Him, they will see true light. Truth comes from gazing upon truth and upon God's glory.

*For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light. (Psalm 36:9)
Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)*

- B. There is a veil when people do not know Christ. It is only in Christ that we can know truth.

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. (2 Corinthians 4:3-5)

IV. BEHOLDING THE GLORY

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

- A. This is the liberty that the Holy Spirit brings to us: to truly know God by being able to behold the glory of God through knowing His Son, Jesus Christ.
- B. This liberty is unto transformation. We are no longer bound to our old nature, to our old-self. We are being transformed into becoming more like Jesus.
 - 1. This transformation is from glory to glory!
 - 2. The more we gaze behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the more we are transformed.
- C. How do we behold Him?
 - 1. We can encounter Jesus, the Living Word, through the eternal Word of God.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. ³⁹ You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. ⁴⁰ But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. (John 5:38-40)

- a. How do you grow spiritually? Get in God's face!
- 2. We can do religious exercises, attend services but never truly gaze upon Jesus. We must believe that this is what God desires. We were made for encounter, for experiencing the presence and pleasure of God.

V. TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY

- A. Christmas is not only about lights and food and good stuff. The circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth were difficult: traveling when 9 months pregnant, etc.
- B. This treasure is in earthen vessels (jars of clay) to put the emphasis on God's power. We through the weaknesses/frailty (hardships) that we face, experience the power of God at work in us. Perhaps, it is especially at those times that we experience God's strength.

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:10)

- C. This gives us strength to go through what we are facing right now. We are able to look beyond the things that our eyes can see and focus on eternal realities.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

- D. Application: Practice of beholding the Lord throughout the day.

The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; (Numbers 6:25)

1. Some paraphrases say: May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you, but it is so much more. The light of God's face is shining upon us.
 - a. He is looking toward us, in our direction.
 - b. He is revealing His heart and desire toward us.
 - c. He is encouraging us.
 - d. We will be transformed into His likeness.
- E. This Christmas season, gaze upon the face of the Son of God and be transformed.
 1. May you experience an even greater glory of gazing upon Jesus' face with all the joy, fascination, wonder, and power that it entails.