

The Reflected Glory

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[0 : 0 0] 37 seconds illustrate on here what a holograph is I'd be very grateful you have to be very scientific I don't telling me about holographic wills I want scientists coming and telling me about I need someone to blame it on I none of you want to do it all right this yeah is supposing that and I I reckon that you're being too shy for reasons that I can't imagine but if I said to you that there is a source of light and there is a figure which is created here by this light this laser beam coming down and that this is the holograph here but it's created by this light here would anybody say that remotely true is that roughly the idea when they create holographs all right well then I'll keep that for later I just wanted to make sure that I wasn't going to get in too much trouble with that the passage that we're looking at today is Hebrews chapter 1 and you'll see it if you want to underline it as I give thrown a lot of scripture at you from different places today it's in the section now Hebrews 1 3 and 4 and the part that I want to talk about today is just the the first phrase he reflects the glory of the heart remember this is the description of who the son is through whom God has spoken in a final and definitive way to us and when it's describing who Jesus is the that's what it says that he reflects he reflects the glory of God well the it's hard to get at a few words like that because in a sense they are they're pretty overwhelming words the New Testament doesn't start there so John 1 start to John chapter 1 tends to start you know within the the beginning was the beginning was the word and the word was the word was the word was with God with his tremendous statement about the Gospels however tell you about the virgin birth or about the birth of John the Baptist about the boyhood of Jesus about the miracles about the parables about the trials and tribulations and all the story of Jesus and it records it all for you right up to the time of his crucifixion and resurrection and those in us those are in a sense the historical picture of who Jesus is and what he did but it was only after that that people came to realize in a more profound sense who Jesus is and the debate is still going on so that Paul Barnett talks about the two faces of Jesus and he talks about how one face is the historical face that we can recognize because of his humanity the other face of the other face of Jesus is the face of God and that a lot of people are familiar with one but not the other but they belong together they are the same person and so when you get to a statement like this statement from Hebrews you're up against a very profound statement indeed when it says that he reflects the glory of God and I think that you could add to it that he alone

reflects the glory of God reflects the glory of God reflects the glory of God as no one else ever has or ever will that he reflects the glory of God well I want to start just to bring to sort of approach this question by asking the question who am I and that's the question you wake up with in the morning you know you say where am I and if there's something familiar around you can answer that but then you say who am I and it may take you a little while to sort the answer to that one out the way you sort it out is that you maybe switch on the news and there's certain reverberations you begin to recognize what you are particularly if you get stock market reports right away and you're a stock broker it helps you to get out of bed and get going or else to pull the covers back up over your head I don't know it's helpful when you wake up in the morning and wonder who you are if there's someone there to say I love you you don't have to reason with it just be grateful for it

I heard yesterday that in the South Granville area 90% of the people wake up in the morning without anybody to say that because they're all singles that dwell there in that in that area they're 90% single another thing that can happen to you in the morning well is that you can you can check the weather or the temperature or see if it's springtime summer or fall you can have a shower which is a kind of religious ritual ablution that you go through every morning whether you need it or not but mostly you need it and that's that helps you to come to terms with your naked self and then you can put on your clothes to cover your nakedness as you want to go out to meet the world and slowly you're trying to rebuild the image which had collapsed into bed the night before and who you are and to face the world and to get it going if you get the morning paper you'll know that you belong to Vancouver if you're interested in this morning your whole life may have been changed by knowing that there's been some major switches on the Vancouver Canucks it may not be important to you but could be you recognize that you belong to Canada you may check your temperature blood pressure and heartbeat if you're a little concerned about yourself as I mostly am and the you can check on the price of the American dollar you can do all sorts of little things that you can do all sorts of little things that help sort of give you dimensions of who you are and begin to give you a kind of self-awareness as to who you are and where you fit in and what's important to you and slowly you sort of resurrect the person of who you are as you head out to work it may cross your mind should I read the Bible and say my prayer well fortunately you don't have to think about that too long because it's already too late and you've got to get to work so you can dismiss that question because maybe some other day it will be possible but today it isn't but then that kind of question niggles you a little bit because you ask well am I the only one or if God is there and I choose not to read the Bible and say my prayers this morning what does that mean?

it obviously means something and it raises for us the question of whether we live in a world in which God exists or not and I don't know whether you think this is a good illustration but if you have a hill that goes up like this up and up and up to the top and then drops off very rapidly and you're not there you are probably profoundly convinced that God doesn't exist because if he did he'd help you and you're having to do it all by yourself and it's all your responsibility if suddenly you get up to the top and take one step too far and are hurtling down here it's worth considering more seriously whether God exists and so that a lot of people's understanding of the existence of God sort of depends which situation they're in whether they're having a hard struggle by themselves or whether they are they're past the point of wanting to question it so what I'm just trying to give you is the consciousness that all of us need in the world in which we live whether or not God is there those of you should live in the world in which we live in which we live in which we live in so far■■ and in an amazing way those who stand up and say God doesn't exist don't live without doubt.

You know, what if they're wrong? And so it's that kind of difficult problem that we have, wondering about what you do about the existence of God.

[9 : 54] And that's a major sort of question that underlies all that we do and all that we think and all that we are. Whether we live in a world where God exists and we can relate to the reality of that God, and that God has spoken to us, or whether in fact we live in a world where God doesn't exist.

Hans Kung has written a book, which is about that thing, and it's entitled Does God Exist? So it's not easy to check the answer out between supper time and the time to go to bed.

It's a big book. And he suggests a number of people who in our society have contended strongly that God doesn't exist.

And he quotes Thorbach, who says, Is not God from the outset a projection of man? In other words, the whole idea of God is an idea that we have had.

It didn't come from out there. It came from in here, within humanity. And so it has no reality apart from the reality we use to confer on the idea. Then he talks about Marx, who speaks of God as an opium of the people.

[11 : 09] That is a kind of an addictive drug from which you have to find freedom if you want to live what truly is life. And others have said that God is the product of the resentment of those who have fallen short.

That if you are an inadequate person, it's helpful to believe in an adequate God. But if you're a more than adequate person, then God is no concern to you. Your potential has been realized in yourself.

And Nietzsche suggested that. Freud suggested that God is an illusion of those who remained infantile. In other words, you haven't grown up.

You haven't come to maturity. And the questions that are contemporary to us, particularly as we come into this war and trying to think about it, can we have morality even without religion?

And the happy optimism of the West has said yes to that. I would think that the war would at least raise some doubt.

[12 : 25] And a lot of people would say that religion has developed out of magic and therefore isn't worth considering. But you see, the difficulty of asking such questions, or my asking such questions as these, because these are very profound questions.

They are, in a sense, the result of the attainment of philosophical consideration and scientific investigation and historical analysis, so that these are the questions that corrode most of the faith in our society, so that most people won't give you an answer to the question, does God exist?

Maybe, maybe not. Just so you're covered on both slanks. And that's where most people remain. And so I recognize the difficulty of me in the position that I'm in, right here, right now, raising such questions, because those questions are so enormous, and time is so short, that you might leave here, having despaired of the little religion you might have had when you came in.

And so I feel this is a very sensitive moment. Lock the doors till I'm finished, you know. But I think there's a necessity in asking such questions, and I think the necessity is, because when you come to such a simple state, almost monosyllabic statement as, he reflects the glory of God, you are making such a stupendous claim, that unless you ask stupendous questions, you won't see the relevance of it.

You follow me? Unless you look at the big, big questions, you're not going to see the relevance of the amazing statement that comes in these first verses of the epistle to the Hebrews, saying that this Son of God, Jesus Christ, reflects exclusively in the whole span of history, he alone reflects the glory of God.

[14 : 48] So that's the big statement, and this is what I want you to think about as you consider that statement.

He reflects the glory of God. God is, as you know, a translation, and this is where I think, I don't know whether this illustration works, but it occurred to me anyway, because here is an apparent existence here, but this existence has no meaning apart from the source of life, so that you cannot dissociate what appears here from the source from which it comes.

And this statement is, in Hebrews, is more like this. It says that you cannot, it's not like a mirror that reflects the glory of God.

This owes its entire being to the glory of God. This is, he is a manifestation of who God is. not just, I mean, you might imagine yourself, in some measure, at your best moments, to reflect the glory of God.

I'll leave you to contemplate. But, but, but, this statement is categorical, in that it says, Jesus, the Son of God, is the one in whom God is seen.

[16 : 22] Now, the reason I put in those other verses, the one from John chapter 1, no one has seen God, the only Son who is in the bosom of the Father, has made him known.

You know how it is. A consistent fear in the Old Testament, that if you were to see God, you would die. So that nobody who's alive, has seen God, and the proof of that is, that there's still a lot.

And so you could say of you, in Old Testament language, that you obviously haven't seen God, because if you had, you'd be dead. And gone. So that, the only way we can, in a sense, see God and live, is if we can see him, in some way, which is not totally overwhelming.

And that's why it says, that only the Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has made him known. The only way you can see God, possibly see God, is in the person of Jesus Christ.

That's the claim that's being made. If you look at the passage from Timothy, it's rather an extensive passage, but the line I want you to look at, is that one which is fourth from the bottom, which talks about, God who is sovereign, King of kings, Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, and dwells in unapproachable life.

[17 : 50] In other words, you can't draw near to him, in terms of his awesome majesty, because you couldn't make anything out of it anyway.

And it's only as, he who dwells in unapproachable life, as you see him reflected in the person of Jesus Christ, that's how biblical Christians understand who Jesus is.

He is the reflection of the unseeable and unapproachable glory of the eternal and sovereign God. Now you can see that that is a stupendous claim.

The God whom no one has ever seen, is seen in Jesus Christ. The God who dwells in unapproachable life, can be approached in Jesus Christ.

The atheist has to turn his back on this, and say, as he closes his eyes, it's dark, you know. And the agnostic has to say, yes, it is unapproachable, and so I'm not going to waste my time.

[19 : 04] And the skeptic is the one who considers that every proposition that is ever put forward deserves only to be doubted.

So, the glory of God is seeable only in the person of Jesus Christ. Now, this illustration then, I thought, might help you to see what's happening when it says, he, that is, this, this person Jesus, is the projection of who God is in such a way that you and I can encounter him.

We actually can encounter God in the person of Jesus Christ. That's the, that's the statement that, that it made. Well, we've been through those big questions.

Now, I want to just come back for a minute to, to the little questions, and they're only little by comparison. I heard the other day that, that a grade 12 teacher in Vancouver gets \$66,000 a year, and it was said in such a way as, isn't that unbelievable?

Yeah, it is unbelievable. Considering the high regard in which education is held in our society, it's totally understandable, you know, that that's way too much money.

[20 : 35] So, and I'm not going to contend about that. I mean, you may have different opinions about that, but, the point, the point that I want to make is this, that unless there was a massive shift in the thinking of our society, for a lot of people, it's quite incomprehensible that somebody that has nothing to do but teach grade 12 kids all day should get such an enormous amount of money.

On the other hand, if our society shifted radically and decided that the grade 12 education of our children was probably the most important contribution to the future of our city and the future of our country and the future of world civilization, then we might be able to pay \$166,000 to grade 12 teachers because we thought that that was terribly important.

So that arguing about that little problem in our society is not particularly significant because it comes out of a particular concept of the world.

The way we see it now is that a teacher who gets \$66,000 is overpaid. But we could change our world so that that would be a different thing altogether.

And the reason I use that illustration is because most of us live our lives with problems like I need a job.

[22 : 07] I'm unemployed. I can't pay my bills. My wife is sick. My child is sick. My friend is sick. There's famine in the world. There is war. There is hunger.

All these things are the kind of personal level problems that all of us run into. And we feel totally inadequate to face and deal with those questions.

And what you have to do is you have to have a kind of basic shift in our society to find a perspective within to which to look at those problems in a new way.

Because the fact is that you're unemployed. You can't pay your bills. Your wife is sick. Your child is sick. Your friend is sick. There's famine in the world. All those questions are totally irrelevant if there is no God.

They just aren't important questions. Ultimately, they're not questions of ultimate importance. And nobody's going to pay a lot of attention to you.

[23 : 14] It's only when you recognize that God is and has spoken to us in the person of his son, Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is the one through whom the world was created two weeks ago.

Sorry, two weeks ago was the one who is to inherit the whole of history. That Jesus Christ is the one by whom the world was created.

And today, Jesus Christ is the one who reflects the glory of God. That's the thing that inspires faith.

faith in God, in such a God, creates hope and commands love. And so, when you are confronted with the question of who is, you know, does God exist?

Our Christian biblical answer is, yes, indeed, he does exist. the very glory, which is the reality of God, which is a reality far beyond the comprehension of philosophy or science, the reality of God has been reflected or revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

[24 : 40] And so, when you are dealing with the immediate and personal problems of your life, you deal with them in terms of a practical faith in Jesus Christ, who is the one in whom the glory of God is reflected.

And that's what our biblical faith is about. And that is why it is important for us to understand that our position is not the position of the skeptic.

Our position is not the position of maybe or maybe not. Our position is that God does exist, that he has revealed himself to us in the prophet.

But in these last days, he has spoken to us by a son. And that this son is the one who is to be the inheritor of the whole of history, the one who has, through whom the whole of creation came into being.

And the one who in his historic person, as born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified dead and buried, that one reflects the essential nature of God.

[25 : 59] He reflects the glory of God, the reality of God. And that we live our lives in that faith. And that's why the preaching of the gospel is an invitation for you to get up in the morning, to ask who you are, and to find that answer given to you as you confront God, as he confronts you in the person of Jesus Christ.

Let me say a prayer. Amen.

yourself to us in Jesus Christ. So we ask that you'll give us hearts to hear him and to respond in faith, in hope, and in love, one for another. Grant us this grace, we ask in his holy name. Amen.