

Defining “The Presence of the Lord”



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"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words."

1 Corinthians 2:13

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When discussing any topic, it is wise to define the terms one is using so that authentic communication takes place, and a rational, and coherent discussion ensues. As I have previously stated in another article, [*“Worship. Prayer & Music”*](#),¹ biblically speaking, singing songs is not essentially “worship” – it is a form of prayer. And I defined “worship” as a lifestyle of surrender and service. Here, we will investigate how Scripture speaks of the concept of “presence”, as well as how the terms “manifested”, and “appearance”, and “glory relate to that.

“Presence”

The Hebrew word translated “presence” is *panim* or *paneh*.² This word can also be translated as “countenance”, or “face”, or “appearance”. Thayer’s Greek Lexicon has this to say about the Hebrew word: *“c. Hebraistically, the appearance one presents by his wealth or poverty, his rank or low condition; outward circumstances, external condition; so used in expressions which denote to regard the person in one’s judgment and treatment of men.”*

¹ Both this article, “Defining ‘The Presence of the Lord’” and “Worship, Prayer & Music” are excerpts from the book, “The Manifested Presence of God” – [eBook](#), [Paperback](#).

² Strong’s § H6440. Cf. Exodus 25:30, 29:11; Numbers 4:7.

This is obviously in reference to the “appearance” presented by a human being to other human beings. But how could we apply this “Hebraism” to an interaction between God and His human beings?

“Appearance”

Like the Hebrew word, *paneh*, in the Old Testament, the Greek word in the New Testament, *prosopon*³, is also translated – “countenance” or “face” or “appearance”. This is an on-going investigation into the nature of that “appearance”. But to begin, I offer the following understanding: Just as a particular dignitary is said to have made an “appearance” at a particular event, we could say that at a particular time and place there was an “appearance” of God (that is, His presence) – whether with one, or “two or three”, or a larger gathering of His people. But the essential difference is that the *human* “dignitary” appeared “in the flesh”, whereas, *with God, who is Spirit* (John 4:24), His “appearance” is obviously “different” – “special”. Thus, the purpose of this article is to describe this spiritual experience in human language to some extent – that is, to give some definition to the “appearance” of God’s presence – *the “outward” and “external” manifestation of the Divine Spirit Being which is*

³ Strong’s # G4383

presented to human beings. But unlike the “Burning Bush” appearance to Moses in the Old Testament,⁴ which was “only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ”,⁵ in the New Covenant this “outward” and “external” manifestation is not material – it is spiritual. God, who is Spirit (in the spiritual realm) interpolating - “crossing over” (manifesting) into the natural realm.

All the New Testament writers used this word, *prosopon*, including Paul. One of the many times he wrote this word was in 2 Corinthians 4:6: “For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness’, is the One who has shone in our hearts to give **the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God** *in the face* of Christ.” Here, Paul says that God reveals “the knowledge of His glory” – and He does so “*in the face* of Christ” – in the “appearance” and “countenance” of Christ. When does He do that? He did that through His Incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9) So, God who is Spirit (John 4:24), revealed His “glory” (which still needs our definition), through **the person and life of “the Man, Christ Jesus”**⁶ in ways which would communicate with human beings.

⁴ Exodus 3

⁵ Colossians 2:17; Cf. Hebrews 8:5, 10:1.

⁶ 1 Timothy 2:5

There is a gospel narration which records a “special” experience of the presence of God when the “glory” “*in the face of Jesus Christ*” was revealed to and experienced by some of His disciples. It is commonly referred to as “The Transfiguration”:²⁸ “He took along Peter, John, and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.²⁹ And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing *became* white and gleaming.³⁰ And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah,³¹ who, *appearing in glory*, were speaking of His departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.³² Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, *they saw His glory* and the two men who were standing with Him.³³ And as these *two men* were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, “*Master, it is good that we are here; and let’s make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah*” —not realizing what he was saying.³⁴ But while he was saying this, a cloud formed and *began* to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.³⁵ And *then* a voice came from the cloud, saying, “*This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!*”³⁶ And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen.” Luke 9:28-36⁷

This was, indeed, a very “special” appearance of the presence of God. It was visual, and seemingly, physical. Such an experience

⁷ Cf. Matthew 16:28-17:9, and Mark 9:1-9

of the presence of God is not repeated in the gospel records. Although not exactly the same, there were many similar “appearances” attested to in the New Testament.⁸ But is God still revealing His “*glory in the face of Jesus Christ*”? Of course. In fact, that is what Paul is communicating about the New Covenant throughout 2 Corinthians - specifically 3:7-18, ending with: “But we all, with unveiled faces, looking as in a mirror at **the glory of the Lord** (“*in the face of Christ*” – 4:6), are being transformed into the same image **from glory to glory**, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

And there have been similar “appearances” reported in Christian history, which may or may not have been authentic. It is not within the scope of this article to offer a comprehensive treatment of the “Transfiguration” nor, the “appearances” of the Risen Christ, nor the authenticity of other spiritual experiences of people throughout Christian history. I simply want to establish the fact of “special” experiences of the presence of God – the revelation of “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” - as distinguished from the omnipresence of God - have taken place many, many times in our universal Christian experience.

But what is most significant to our investigation is to establish that, according to Scripture, God has ordained that authentic

⁸ John 20

“appearances” of “the glory of God” only *take place* “in the face of Jesus Christ” – that is, specifically and uniquely in the revelation of the mystery of Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 19:10) This is how we are to discern and evaluate “special” spiritual experiences of the presence of God.

“Glory”

Along with Paul⁹, both John¹⁰ and Peter¹¹ testify to seeing – that is, experiencing – “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”. So, what is “the glory of God” which is “appearing” in some way through a “special” experience of His presence? This is a grand topic!

Essentially, “the glory of God” is the manifestation of the spiritual qualities – all the attributes – which we use in an effort to define who God is – that is, His nature and character.¹²

In a manner of speaking, *“the glory of God” begins and ends with the Alpha and the Omega – Jesus Christ.* Again, when Jesus of Nazareth said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father”

⁹ 2 Corinthians 4:6, Cf. 3:18

¹⁰ John 1:14; John 20:30-31; 1 John 1:1-3

¹¹ 2 Peter 1:16-18

¹² For more discussion on the glory of God and His attributes, see [*Some Thoughts on the Glory of God.*](#)

(John 14:9), **He was declaring that He was the human manifestation of God who is Spirit (John 4:24) – the manifestation of God the Father’s attributes.** For our discussion, it may be helpful to consider that these spiritual attributes were not manifested in physical commodities – they were *manifested by people experiencing a Person*. In the same way, we are not saying that the “special” presence of the Lord is manifested in physical commodities – but rather in **an experience of the various spiritual attributes of God**. Admittedly, it is a challenging task to communicate this phenomenon in human language.

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews¹³ was inspired by the Holy Spirit to take on this task of communication when he wrote: “The Son is the radiance *and only expression of the glory* of [our awesome] God [reflecting God’s Shekinah glory, the Light-being, the brilliant light of the divine], and *the exact representation and perfect imprint* of His [Father’s] essence.” (Hebrews 1:3 AMP)

This verse succinctly tells us two things:

Firstly, that “the glory of God” is revealed in and through Christ: “The Son is the radiance *and only expression of the glory* of [our awesome] God.” I believe it must be established that anything being perceived as a “special” experience of the presence of

¹³ Which may also be Paul.

God must be taking place in the context of revelation of the mystery of Christ.¹⁴

Secondly, this verse also tells us quite a bit about what the "glory" is – namely, a reflection ("appearance", "countenance", "face") of "the *radiance* of His glory and the exact representation of His (God's) nature." While only Jesus Christ is "the exact representation", this "special appearance" in the manifested presence of God which we are discussing can be understood to be a "radiance" of God's glory. The Greek word, *apaugasma*¹⁵, used only here in Hebrews 1:3, means **reflected brightness, or effulgence, out-raying, or "radiance" of an original light.**¹⁶ *The Amplified Bible* translators chose to "amplify" this Greek word as "**God's Shekinah glory, the Light-being, the brilliant light of the divine**".

Just as any "special" experience of the presence of God must take place in the context of revelation of the mystery of Christ, I also offer that this "special" experience therefore must also take place in the context of the true Shekinah glory.¹⁷

¹⁴ Recommended Reading: ["The Foundation of the Apostles & Prophets"](#); ["Seeing Christ"](#); "Christ-centered Ministry for Discipleship & Equipping": [Read](#) / [Listen](#).

¹⁵ Strong's # 541

¹⁶ Cf. *Vincent's Word Studies* and *Roberson's Word Pictures*

¹⁷ See: Article, ["The Shekinah"](#), and eBook, ["The Manifested Presence of God"](#).

Bill & Frances Furioso
~ At Christ's Table ~



Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, disciplined many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... www.AtChristsTable.org

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