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## A Biblical-Theological Analysis of the Term **δόξα** (Glory) in the New Testament

Jael Winterholter

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# SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

**“A Biblical-Theological Analysis of the Term δόξα (Glory) in  
the New Testament”**

written by

**Jael Winterholter**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for completion of  
the Carl Goodson Honors Program  
meets the criteria for acceptance  
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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April 25, 2022

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## I. Introduction

Much discussion in today's evangelical culture includes or revolves around the biblical concept of "glory." Many faithful teachers, pastors, and writers speak of its significance by urging Christian believers to behold God's glory, to glorify him through their daily lives, and to eagerly anticipate the day of their own glorification. These exhortations originate from the New Testament use of the Greek word, δόξα, and communicate the concept English readers understand as "glory" in all of the previously mentioned contexts and more. δόξα plays a significant role throughout the New Testament, appearing over 150 times and in all but four of its books. When believers distill its sweeping semantic range into several clear, properly understood definitions, a useful biblical theology of glory emerges. This understanding provides the church with key insights into God's nature and his final plan for redeeming Creation.

Scholars agree that despite its scriptural prominence, "glory" has not received the academic attention it merits.<sup>1</sup> Often, this results in readers who rely upon "preconceived cultural notions of glory" that are destined to fall short of the biblical reality.<sup>2</sup> Thankfully, several faithful scholars provide helpful expositions of the term, and each illuminates the biblical reality of "glory" in a unique way. Some authors define glory as a revelation of God's holy nature,<sup>3</sup> while others consider it a life marked by God's presence,<sup>4</sup> and still others define glory as the gift of God's Word to his people.<sup>5</sup> This thesis draws from a variety of scholarly assessments of δόξα to help readers resist a faulty understanding of glory that only highlights one aspect of the term's multifaceted meaning.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 43.

<sup>2</sup>Haley Goranson Jacob, *Conformed to the Image of his Son* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 62.

<sup>3</sup>Bauckham, 59-60; Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2006), 46.

<sup>4</sup>N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2010), 260.

<sup>5</sup>Tim Meadowcraft, *The Message of the Word of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 163.

Additionally, this thesis helps readers avoid the practice of gathering various explanations of “glory” and weaving them into a “one-size-fits-all” definition. Merging the definitions of δόξα poses a great danger to the accurate interpretation of the term. New Testament scholar Haley Goranson Jacob warns students and scholars alike against treating the meaning of any scriptural word or phrase as “a ForceFlex trash bag that just keeps stretching.”<sup>6</sup> This exegetical error, which Carson describes as “illegitimate totality transfer” and Duvall and Hays describe as the “overload fallacy,” occurs when readers assume that a word takes on its whole range of meaning each time it appears.<sup>7</sup> Those who consolidate the range of meaning for δόξα into one holistic definition aim for a full-bodied understanding of the term’s theological richness. However, falling into the “overload fallacy” neglects both the literary context and the author’s careful nuance. As a result, this fallacy obscures the true sense of δόξα.

When it comes to interpreting δόξα, the two concerns mentioned above reveal the essence of the problem. One extreme occurs when believers emphasize one aspect of δόξα to the neglect of others. The other occurs when believers fuse each of “glory’s” domains together until the author’s intended meaning becomes nebulously blurred. These concerns reveal the great need for a treatment of δόξα that provides lay Christians with a clear understanding of glory, a working knowledge of its various definitions, and a proper means of discerning the term’s intended meaning within its particular context. This thesis serves this purpose by surveying the use of δόξα in the New Testament and providing three primary categories through which its meaning can be understood: a descriptor of physical appearance, a descriptor of God’s nature and

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<sup>6</sup>Goranson Jacob, 4.

<sup>7</sup>D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 62; J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), 168.

presence, or an indicator of status or praise. These three categories correspond with the three main sections of the paper and address each category's domains and subdomains.

The first category, δόξα as a state of physical appearance, is fairly straightforward and consists of one central domain. However, the second and third categories – (2) δόξα as an indicator of God's presence and character and (3) δόξα as an indicator of status – carry more nuance and therefore separate into several subdomains. Each division explores scriptural examples of δόξα, regarding their treatment of glory and their textual significance. A final conclusion summarizes the findings of this analysis and draws out the practical application produced by a holistic biblical theology of glory. Immediately following this conclusion is an appendix for reference, which categorizes the 152 occurrences of δόξα in the New Testament into specific domains or subdomains.

Although categorizing δόξα into domains *can* be relatively straightforward, often, it is not. The term's versatility often renders its domain placement not a choice between "right and wrong," but "better and best." While readers should always avoid the overload fallacy, many occurrences of δόξα can arguably fit into multiple categories. For example, a physical display of God's glory can also appear to indicate his presence. If the surrounding context directly refers to "glory's" observable brilliance while merely implying God's presence, then the term is placed into the first category, "a state of physical appearance." The above is just one example of how domain placement can be somewhat subjective. Thus, the domain placements and scriptural examples referred to throughout this paper should not function as absolutes or diminish any valid connections one domain of δόξα may have with another.

Instead, the following discussion of domains and their comprehensive outline provide a framework for readers to develop a clearer understanding of the biblical concept of glory. A

well-developed theology of glory serves as a source of Christian hope, as believers seek to understand the glorious nature of God and anticipate the day when they, too, will be ultimately glorified through the saving work of Christ.

## I. δόξα as a State of Physical Appearance

Perhaps the most widespread concept of “glory” is that of bright, dazzling light, emanating from a source of transcendent splendor. Louw and Nida describe this domain as “the quality of splendid, remarkable appearance,”<sup>8</sup> while Danker and Bauer define it as “the condition of being bright or shining.”<sup>9</sup> Luke 2:9 offers a classic example of this physical glory, where presumably sleepy shepherds, guarding their sheep by night, suddenly find themselves in the presence of God’s brilliant, shining glory. Luke presents a parallel situation in 9:32, where Peter, James, and John become “heavy with sleep” after spending their day ascending a mountain with Jesus.<sup>10</sup> Suddenly, the radiant glory of Christ sharply awakens them from their slumber! Luke 9:29 provides a physical description of Jesus’s glory on the mountain, explaining that “the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.” In both scenarios, the manifest display of God’s divine nature takes on a physical form that overwhelms the senses of its human witnesses, primarily through a blinding light.

In 2 Corinthians 3:7-11, Paul seemingly alludes to the Transfiguration and similarly employs the use of δόξα as a state of physical appearance. In order to further his argument identifying Christians as “ministers of a new covenant,”<sup>11</sup> he draws attention to the old covenant, calling it the “ministry of death.”<sup>12</sup> Even this “ministry of death” comes to Mount Sinai with radiant glory, and after receiving the law, Moses’s face fills with such glory that his fellow Israelites could not even look upon him.<sup>13</sup> After discussing the glory accompanying the old

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<sup>8</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1960), 1:695.

<sup>9</sup>Frederick William Danker and Walter Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2001), 257.

<sup>10</sup>Luke 9:32. All Scripture references come from the ESV translation.

<sup>11</sup>1 Corinthians 3:6.

<sup>12</sup>1 Corinthians 3:7.

<sup>13</sup>1 Corinthians 3:6-7.



covenant, Paul poses the question, “will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?”<sup>14</sup> Here, Paul draws readers’ minds back to the Transfiguration, where Jesus’s face is glorified on the mount just as Moses’s was on Mount Sinai. However, in the Transfiguration event, Jesus’s glory outshines both Moses and Elijah.<sup>15</sup> Then, Paul argues that the “glory” of the old covenant fades away because the “glory” of the new covenant far supersedes it. This final point solidifies his argument that the new covenant given through Christ replaces the old covenant given through Moses. The use of δόξα in 1 Corinthians 3:7-11 primarily communicates brilliant light, which radiantly transforms the faces of Jesus and Moses and appears to validate their ministries. A brief study of the text reveals that this occurrence of δόξα does not merely denote “brilliant light,” but also functions as a bestowment of honor and blessing from the Lord. By declaring Jesus’s ministry as more glorious than Moses’s, Paul does not merely convey that Jesus or his actions shine more brightly, but that his covenant carries a higher authority and more accurately reflects the heart of God. Thus, while the occurrences of δόξα in this passage can be primarily categorized as “a state of physical appearance,” this dazzling, observable glory also symbolizes honor, blessing, and God’s redemptive work.

In the next section of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, he continues utilizing δόξα to indicate physical brilliance and furthers the analogy between Moses and Christ. In the days of the old covenant, Moses protects the Israelites from the reflection of God’s brilliant glory by veiling his face.<sup>16</sup> However, in the new covenant, Christ removes this veil and allows the people of God to gaze upon his glory freely!<sup>17</sup> In turn, as the people look upon the glory of God, they become

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<sup>14</sup>2 Corinthians 3:8.

<sup>15</sup>While Luke 9:31 records Moses and Elijah appearing in glory, the narrator only mentions that the disciples saw the glory of Christ in v. 32. Furthermore, the Father’s voice emphasizes Christ as his “Chosen One,” which also serves to elevate Christ over Moses and Elijah.

<sup>16</sup>2 Corinthians 3:13.

<sup>17</sup>2 Corinthians 3:16-18.

better image-bearers of his glory.<sup>18</sup> Once again, Paul's use of δόξα does not only describe glory as a brilliant physical state, but as a manifestation of God's divine nature. Witnesses of God's physical glory realize new depths of his righteous character and his spirit of grace as they experience his glorious presence.

The glory of God is often described as something his people "see," whether literally, as in the Father's appearance to the shepherds and the Son's Transfiguration, or figuratively, as Jesus describes himself as the "light of the world."<sup>19</sup> While the description of God's glory as "light" can refer to a physical phenomenon or a literary image, both symbolize the underlying reality that God's presence "radiates" the fullness of his divine qualities in a profound way.<sup>20</sup> Just as the light of God's glory produces tangible evidence of his majesty before the shepherds and disciples, the symbolic "light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" produce tangible evidence of God's presence in the lives of his people.<sup>21</sup>

However, while God is the source of all physical glory, he does not reserve it for himself. Instead, his benevolent and loving nature prompts him to bestow his glory upon created beings, including his angels and his redeemed people. In Revelation 18:1, an angel comes down to earth as God's messenger and brightens the world with his glory. In 1 Corinthians 15:40, Paul mentions God's plan to glorify his people's resurrection bodies in the coming age. God's supreme holiness does not allow for sin or sinful beings to remain in his physical presence.<sup>22</sup> Thus, his promises to wholly glorify a once-sinful people – both physically and spiritually – offer

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<sup>18</sup>2 Corinthians 3:18.

<sup>19</sup>See John 1:4-5, 7-9; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46.

<sup>20</sup>Goranson Jacob, 41-42.

<sup>21</sup>2 Corinthians 4:4.

<sup>22</sup>See Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16.

radiant hope for holistic redemption and a fuller understanding of the significance of Christ's work on the cross.

Up to this point, the examples of δόξα as physical glory have also carried a type of spiritual significance, pointing ultimately to the majesty of God's presence or the eschatological glorification of his people. However, it is important to note that there are several biblical instances where δόξα does not carry these spiritual overtones. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus exhorts his disciples not to worry and cites examples of his Father's lovingkindness toward creation. To illustrate his point that his listeners should not worry about clothing, Jesus states that the lilies of the field have greater beauty than Solomon "in all his glory."<sup>23</sup> In this instance, Solomon's royal, stately appearance does not directly signify spiritual blessing, but rather signifies his honor and status as king. Jesus's emphasis on God's providence for the flowers and grass of the field rather than Solomon himself suggests that this spiritual lesson does not center upon "glory," but simply utilizes δόξα as a term for physical splendor reflecting stately honor.

Matthew 4:8 and Luke 4:6 employ δόξα similarly in their discussion of Jesus's temptation. In both passages, Satan brings Jesus to a mountaintop and shows him "the kingdoms of the world and their glory."<sup>24</sup> Afterward, Satan tempts Jesus to worship him in exchange for authority over these kingdoms. Although Jesus's temptation experience likely originated from a vision, he still *sees* the kingdoms' glory, which implies that their glory consists of physical splendor. While the direct use of δόξα pertains to fading, worldly glory in this passage, the concept of eternal glory lies just below the surface. Satan tries to threaten Christ's eternal glory and status as the Son of God by tempting him with authority over the glorious kingdoms of earth.

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<sup>23</sup>Matthew 6:29.

<sup>24</sup>Matthew 3:8.

ronically, by resisting Satan's temptations, Christ cements his status as the glorified son of God who will rule over all Creation and restore its glory.

These scriptural examples provide insight on the use of δόξα as a physical descriptor throughout the New Testament. While sometimes communicating the splendor or status of earthly cities and human kings, the term most often speaks of something greater. These glimpses of God's radiant, overwhelming glory inspire Christians to long for the day when they will live in the New Jerusalem, which will come down from heaven "having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel."<sup>25</sup> It is here that even the beauty of the lilies is far surpassed! Furthermore, this city is not illuminated by the sun, nor ruled by David, Solomon, or any merely human king. Instead, Jesus Christ, the slain and risen Lamb of God, will illuminate the city with his glory and establish peace under his righteous rule.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Revelation 21:10-11.

<sup>26</sup>Revelation 21:22-23.

### III. δόξα as a Descriptor of God's Presence and Character

#### A. As God's Presence

While δόξα as dazzling splendor is a common perception of glory, δόξα as an indication of God's presence appears to be a less popular notion. Glory as a physical phenomenon appears within the most prominent lexicons, but glory as God's presence does not.<sup>27</sup> However, several scholars who have recently considered the relationship between "glory" and "presence" suggest a clear connection between the two.<sup>28</sup> Duvall and Hays stand at the forefront of this discussion with their proposal that, in many instances, the "glory of God" can be understood as "God's glorious presence."<sup>29</sup>

Duvall and Hays provide this definition in their discussion of Acts 7, particularly in the context of v. 55, where Stephen looks to heaven and sees "the glory of God" as the Sanhedrin stone him. Alternatively, Danker and Bauer describe this occurrence of δόξα as an indicator of God's transcendence, and Louw and Nida interpret the term as an indicator of God's physical splendor.<sup>30</sup> However, Duvall and Hays provide a compelling argument that Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin explicitly links God's glory with his presence among his people.<sup>31</sup> Stephen introduces "the God of *glory*" who "*appeared* to our father Abraham," and proceeds to trace the presence of God among the people of Israel until the days of Solomon.<sup>32</sup> Although Stephen acknowledges Solomon's construction of the temple, he argues that God's glorious presence is not confined to buildings constructed by mankind.<sup>33</sup> It is this context from which Stephen looks

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<sup>27</sup>See Danker and Bauer, 257, and Louw and Nida, 1:695 for their descriptions of "δόξα" as a physical state. Neither associate any domain of "δόξα" with presence.

<sup>28</sup>J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *God's Relational Presence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 215; Goranson Jacob, 69.

<sup>29</sup>Duvall and Hays, *Presence*, 215.

<sup>30</sup>Danker and Bauer, 257; Louw and Nida, 1:695.

<sup>31</sup>Duvall and Hays, *Presence*, 215.

<sup>32</sup>Duvall and Hays, *Presence*, 215; Acts 2:2-47.

<sup>33</sup>Duvall and Hays, *Presence*, 215; Acts 2:48-50.

to heaven and sees God's glory, which seems best understood as his presence. While God's transcendence and physical splendor likely appear in Stephen's vision, their textual importance appears secondary in comparison to the primary reality of God's presence. Shortly before martyrdom, Stephen describes God's glorious presence as it appeared to Abraham, Moses, and Joseph. In his dying moments, he becomes a witness of this very same presence of God in all his splendor and glory.

*B. As a Revelation of God's Divine Nature*

A few scriptural references employ δόξα as a sign or miraculous event that provides insight into God's nature, particularly his great power and his total goodness. In John 11, Jesus commands the removal of the stone placed in front of Lazarus' grave, but Martha quickly objects out of fear that her brother's decaying body will release a foul odor.<sup>34</sup> Jesus responds to Martha's objection with a question: "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"<sup>35</sup> Once the stone is rolled away, Jesus thanks his Father for listening to his prayers and raises Lazarus back to life.<sup>36</sup>

In this instance, Jesus's great miracle manifests his glory, which reflects his authority as the Son of God and his heart for humanity. Jesus's resuscitation of Lazarus' earthly life foreshadows the future glory God eventually grants all of his children in the coming age. This miracle highlights Christ's power and his love as the final solution to eradicating sin and death. Here, God's δόξα reveals his divine ability to reign over death, rescue his people, and restore his Creation from brokenness to glory.

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<sup>34</sup>John 11:40-41.

<sup>35</sup>John 11:40.

<sup>36</sup>John 11:41-44.

### C. As God's Divine Nature

In the section above, δόξα refers to a miracle, revelation, or specific event pointing to God's nature. However, New Testament authors more frequently employ the term as a direct reference to God's nature itself. While a sign revealing God's glory may still be present in these cases, God's nature is the reality to which δόξα refers. Goranson Jacob writes, "the glory of God identifies who God is, and who God is includes both his person (ontology) and his activity (function)."<sup>37</sup>

Throughout his gospel, John the apostle frequently utilizes δόξα to convey the essence of God's nature, or according to Bauckham, "the visible revelation of God's character."<sup>38</sup> A prime example is found in John 2, where Jesus displays his glorious, divine nature by transforming water to wine at a wedding celebration. In v. 11, John notes this miracle as the first "sign" Jesus performs and notes that it "manifest[s] his glory." Before this point, Jesus keeps his divine identity largely hidden from the eyes of humanity. However, Bauckham suggests that Jesus's glory, revealed through his miraculous works, causes witnesses to consider "whether they are encountering something more than the flesh," or similarly stated, whether they are experiencing a display of divine power that surpasses human capabilities.<sup>39</sup>

Although it could be argued that this miracle primarily displays God's presence, the text does not seem to emphasize this point. John adds that Jesus's disciples believed in him after witnessing the sign that manifested his glory.<sup>40</sup> This response of belief suggests that the disciples recognize Jesus's *divine power*. After recognizing this power as an outworking of God's divine nature, they place their belief in him. Christ's glory, manifested through this first sign, indicates

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<sup>37</sup>Goranson Jacob, 47.

<sup>38</sup>Bauckham, 72.

<sup>39</sup>Bauckham, 55.

<sup>40</sup>John 2:11.

at least two aspects of his wholly divine nature: his authority over the created realm and his desire to provide abundantly for his people.



#### IV. δόξα as an Indicator of Honor or Status

##### A. As Honor

Nearly every time the Greek word δόξα occurs in the New Testament, English translators describe the term as “glory.” However, in 2 Corinthians 6:8, the ESV renders δόξα as “honor.” In several other passages, the word “glory” conveys honor or status. Danker and Bauer agree, as they list “honor as enhancement or recognition of status or performance” as a primary domain for δόξα within their lexicon.<sup>41</sup>

In 2 Corinthians 6, Paul strives to convey his integrity to the Corinthian church by listing an array of adversities he has endured throughout his ministry and emphasizes his perseverance. While facing hunger, physical beatings, time in prison, and nights without sleep, Paul continues to find sustenance in the fruit of the Spirit.<sup>42</sup> In addition, he learns to persevere while receiving “slander or praise,” and most pertinent to this discussion, “honor (δόξα) or dishonor.”<sup>43</sup> By contrasting these two words, Paul clearly intends to communicate δόξα as the opposite of dishonor. Interpreting δόξα as honor also fits with the main message of the passage: Now, the Corinthians must accept Paul’s legitimacy and his teaching in the church. At the same time, Paul remains eager to serve Christ regardless of whether his own ministry is honored by others, including the church of Corinth.

Hubbard interprets the δόξα occurring in 2 Corinthians 6:8 differently, suggesting that Paul alludes to a specific occurrence in Lystra where the people attempted to worship him and Barnabas.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Hubbard concludes that Paul’s mention of δόξα refers to “worship,”

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<sup>41</sup>Danker and Bauer, 257.

<sup>42</sup>2 Corinthians 6:4-6.

<sup>43</sup>2 Corinthians 6:8.

<sup>44</sup>Moyer V. Hubbard, *2 Corinthians*, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI, 2017), 104.

specifically the worship ascribed to him in Lystra. However, this conclusion seems speculative and unlikely, as mention of the Lystra incident never explicitly appears in the text.

Hubbard's view seems increasingly improbable when considering Paul's usage of δόξα in 1 Thessalonians 2:6. This parallel passage, which also includes a description of Paul's hardships, provides additional insight into his use of δόξα in 2 Corinthians 6:8. In 1 Thessalonians 2, Paul emphasizes his search for God-given approval rather than approval from man. In v. 6, Paul supports his claim by explaining that his team never sought "glory from people."<sup>45</sup> However, in the same verse Paul also notes that his team "could have made demands as apostles of Christ."<sup>46</sup> Due to his apostolic status, Paul could have justifiably requested that the churches esteem him as a church leader and provide him with personal support. However, Paul never would have suggested that his apostleship merited worship, as he made clear by his strong objections to his worshippers in Lystra.<sup>47</sup>

Paul's usage of δόξα in 2 Thessalonians 2:6 clearly rules out the plausibility of δόξα as worship in this context, and instead points to a respected honor and status (which Paul could have demanded, but did not). Due to the parallels between 2 Thessalonians 2 and 2 Corinthians 6, it seems fitting to conclude that Paul utilizes δόξα to convey the same meaning in both contexts: an indicator of honor and status.

### *B. As Honor by Fulfillment*

Many New Testament references describe δόξα as the honor and glory specifically received upon the righteous fulfillment of one's proper role. The use of δόξα in Luke 24:26 provides a key example of this definition. In this chapter, Jesus approaches several Israelites

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<sup>45</sup>2 Thessalonians 2:1-6.

<sup>46</sup>2 Thessalonians 2:6.

<sup>47</sup>Acts 14:14-18.

walking toward Emmaus, who were unaware that the very man they were discussing had just joined their conversation. Before recognizing their new companion as Christ, they tell him of their disappointment in Jesus's crucifixion because they had hoped that he would be the one to restore Israel.<sup>48</sup> In response, Jesus poses a rhetorical question and asks the men whether it was necessary for the Christ to endure the suffering of crucifixion in order to enter into his eternal δόξα.<sup>49</sup> Even while praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus understands this fundamental reality that the men walking to Emmaus do not: dying on the cross was the necessary fulfillment of his role as the Messiah and his path to glory.<sup>50</sup> Goranson Jacob understands references to Jesus's glory in this eschatological manner, as she writes that his lordship of glory refers to the honor he receives as "the risen and exalted King who in his exalted status embodies the supreme Ruler" over all his Creation.<sup>51</sup>

Similarly, the Lord's people receive honor and glory for righteous fulfillment of their roles just as Christ receives glory for fulfilling his role as Messiah. In Romans 3:23, Paul clearly states that humanity has fallen short of the δόξα God prepared for them by saying: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Many scholars agree that the δόξα in this passage refers to the glory God originally intended to bestow upon his people as they bore his image and emulated his righteous rule over Creation.<sup>52</sup> Due to the Fall, salvation in Christ and redemption from sin are necessary prerequisites for the restoration of humanity's honor. The perfect life and death of Christ Jesus enables this forgiveness and restoration of δόξα within God's chosen

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<sup>48</sup>Luke 19:15, 19-21.

<sup>49</sup>Luke 24:26.

<sup>50</sup>John 17:1-5.

<sup>51</sup>Goranson Jacob, 114.

<sup>52</sup>Peter Lewis, *The Message of the Living God*, The Bible Speaks Today Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 264; Douglas Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 247; Jacob, 99.

people. As 2 Corinthians 4:18 explains, in Christ, this restoration of humanity's δόξα begins as they start "beholding the glory of the Lord" and are "being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another."

Goranson Jacob makes a similar argument, suggesting that those "conformed to the image of his Son" will receive glory as they fulfill their purpose of carrying out Christ's righteous rule in the New Creation.<sup>53</sup> This purpose is indicated in Romans 8, and particularly v. 18 and v. 21, which state that Creation longs for the final glorification of God's people. In this final glorification, God's people receive δόξα for fulfilling their original role as rulers and restorers of Creation. However, God's people are only capable of fulfilling this role through conformation to Christ, who granted the church freedom by fulfilling his role of submitting to the cross. By fulfilling his role as the Messiah who gave his life for the redemption of Israel, the nations, and Creation, Christ now receives eternal honor as the righteous Son of God, who will soon reign over his eschatological kingdom in its perfected state. In addition, Christ serves as the justification of sinners and the fulfillment of Israel's mission, so that all nations may experience eternal δόξα through the redeeming work of Christ.

### *C. As Worship of God Himself*

The use of δόξα as honor bestowed upon God is prominent throughout the New Testament. Believers give honor to God because they recognize his divine moral goodness and his absolute power over all things. For example, in 1 Timothy 1:17, the apostle Paul attributes eternal glory to God after declaring him the "King of the ages, immortal, invisible," and "the only God." By giving God glory, Paul worships the Lord, his transcendent status as the *only* God, and his divine status as the everlasting King. Similarly, Peter declares that Christ should

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<sup>53</sup>Goranson Jacob, 259; Romans 8:29.

receive eternal δόξα for his role as “our Lord and Savior” and his possession of all “grace and knowledge.”<sup>54</sup> Jude’s letter also features δόξα in this manner, as he attributes glory to God the Father through his Son, Jesus Christ.<sup>55</sup>

However, Revelation emphasizes “glory” as worship more often than any other New Testament book. While many scriptural authors conclude their letters by proclaiming the glory of God, John provides a unique and emphatic doxology which attributes glory to Jesus and “celebrates what Jesus has done” in the opening portion of his letter.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, John proclaims Jesus as “him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” before proclaiming, “to him be glory. . . forever and ever.”<sup>57</sup> In a single sentence, John worships Christ for his loving nature, his power to defeat sin, and his redemptive plan to restore his children so they can enjoy his presence. δόξα functions as an expression of praise that worships Christ for all his divine actions and attributes.

As the book of Revelation progresses, John invites his readers to imagine his experience in the spectacular throne room of God. Immediately surrounding God’s throne are four divine creatures who continually proclaim God’s holiness and his immortality throughout the day and night. While these four creatures give “glory” to God, so do twenty-four elders who also encircle God’s throne.<sup>58</sup> These elders first remove their crowns before God’s throne and then describe God as worthy to receive “glory” because of his role as the divine Creator of heaven and earth.<sup>59</sup> δόξα unmistakably represents the great worship and honor given to God by these holy heavenly beings who recognize his divine power as well as his divine accomplishments.

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<sup>54</sup>2 Peter 3:18.

<sup>55</sup>Jude 25.

<sup>56</sup>J. Scott Duvall, *Revelation*, Teach the Text Commentary Series, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014), 26.

<sup>57</sup>Revelation 1:5-6.

<sup>58</sup>Revelation 4:9-10.

<sup>59</sup>Revelation 4:11.

Finally, a moving illustration of δόξα as divine worship occurs in Revelation 19, which discusses the marriage supper of the Lamb. John hears “the voice of a great multitude,” which consists of the people of God, crying out:

“Hallelujah!  
 For the Lord our God  
     the Almighty reigns.  
 Let us rejoice and exult  
     and give him the δόξα,  
 for the marriage of the Lamb has come  
     and his Bride has made herself ready,”<sup>60</sup>

This powerful proclamation of God’s people celebrates the utter fullness of his glory, which is displayed through his absolute power to defeat the forces of evil and to redeem his children by the work of the Risen Lamb. This praise also celebrates God’s goodness, as he graciously gives his own Son to redeem his Bride so that he can dwell with her for all eternity. While the defeat of Satan and coming of the New Creation have yet to occur in this stage of the narrative, this doxology foresees the arrival of these eschatological events. These events reveal God’s ultimate power and his abundantly gracious nature, and these divine qualities merit the Lord’s δόξα, the glory given to him as worship.

#### *D. As Excellence Displayed*

Occasionally, New Testament authors also use δόξα as a reference to a group, person, or object that displays the excellence of another being. In 1 Thessalonians 2:20, Paul warmly commends the Thessalonian church by asking, “For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?”<sup>61</sup> In the next verse, Paul declares the Thessalonian church to be his “glory” and his joy.<sup>62</sup> Paul clearly delights in his spiritual

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<sup>60</sup>Revelation 19:6b-7.

<sup>61</sup>1 Thessalonians 2:19.

<sup>62</sup>1 Thessalonians 2:20.

children and their growth in Christ since he first ministered to them. He displays great confidence that their growth in godliness will display his own excellence to Christ on the day of his return.

Paul similarly utilizes δόξα in 1 Corinthians 11 in his discussion of head coverings. In this passage, he forbids men from covering their heads during prophesy or prayer because they are “the image and glory of God.”<sup>63</sup> Once again, the glory of humanity comes from bearing God’s image. Paul suggests that man manifests God’s glory by properly adhering to social customs that reflect his desire to honor God through his dress. Man is responsible for reflecting God’s glory, and in this instance, Paul relates this identity to proper dress.

Similarly, Paul describes a wife as the “glory” of her husband.<sup>64</sup> The wife honors her husband by covering her head, which culturally communicates her commitment to him. Alternatively, the absence of a head covering communicates her eligibility for marriage, bringing her husband shame and dishonor.<sup>65</sup> By covering her head, the woman shows the δόξα of her husband. Her willingness to dress in a culturally appropriate way demonstrates respect to her husband and commends his honorable status to others.

#### *E. As God’s Name*

Only once throughout the whole New Testament, δόξα functions as a name or divine title for God. This one occurrence can be found in 2 Peter 1:16-21, a passage centering on the concept of God’s glory. In these verses, Peter primarily argues that the apostles’ testimonies of Christ are not “cleverly designed myths,” but firsthand accounts of Christ’s majesty.<sup>66</sup> Although the Greek

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<sup>63</sup>1 Corinthians 11:7.

<sup>64</sup>1 Corinthians 11:7.

<sup>65</sup>J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2020), 1112.

<sup>66</sup>2 Peter 1:16.

word for “majesty” in this word is not δόξα itself, it serves as the introduction to the concept of God’s glorious and divine nature within this passage. Afterwards, Peter cites two of his own encounters with the glory of Christ: first, at Christ’s baptism, and second, at the Transfiguration.<sup>67</sup> He describes Jesus’s baptism as a time when Jesus received “honor and glory” from God the Father, during which the Father announced Jesus to be his “beloved Son.”<sup>68</sup> However, when describing the voice of God the Father, Peter refers to him as the “Majestic Glory.”<sup>69</sup> While δόξα as a title for God remains a rare scriptural occurrence, it fits well within this passage. By establishing God the Father as the divine source of glory and the one who bestows glory upon Christ, Peter draws attention to his witness to Christ’s majesty, and ultimately, the truth of his testimony that Christ is the Lord and Savior. Peter’s use of δόξα as a name for God noticeably emphasizes the Father’s divine nature, which serves his broader argument that Christ, in all his glory, must be the Son of God.

#### *F. As Celestial Beings*

Though an uncommon occurrence, the authors of 2 Peter and Jude use δόξα as a reference to celestial beings. Louw and Nida categorize this usage as a reference to “a supernatural being deserving respect and honor,” and Danker and Bauer similarly describe this sense of δόξα as “a transcendent being deserving of honor.”<sup>70</sup> In both letters, Peter and Jude warn the churches against false teachers and their unholy practices, including an incredible irreverence and blasphemy against “glories,” presumably wicked celestial beings.<sup>71</sup> The wickedness of these celestial beings appears blatantly in the proceeding verses. The authors explain that even the

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<sup>67</sup>2 Peter 1:17-18.

<sup>68</sup>2 Peter 1:17.

<sup>69</sup>2 Peter 1:17.

<sup>70</sup>Louw and Nida, 1:148; Danker and Bauer, 258.

<sup>71</sup>2 Peter 2:10; Jude 8.



Lord's angels, who carry much greater authority than these false teachers, refuse to blaspheme these wicked celestial beings because they possess great power.<sup>72</sup> While Bauckham suggests that the biblical authors describe these evil beings as "glories" because they manifest the glory of God, their wicked nature makes this idea difficult to reconcile.<sup>73</sup> It seems safer to say that these beings possess "glory" because of their significant spiritual power. While all glory bestowed on created beings comes from God, these wicked beings abuse their power, and their actions no longer reflect God's nature or his goodness. Regardless, these beings receive significant respect and status from the biblical authors, which warrants their "glorious" label.

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<sup>72</sup>J. Daryl Charles, *Jude*, v. 13 of Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 401; 2 Peter 2:11; Jude 9.

<sup>73</sup>Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 57.

## V. Conclusion

Unfortunately for modern day believers, the concept of “glory” surfaces in spiritual discussion far more often than its meaning is explained or understood. As a result, Christians are poorly equipped to navigate the term’s diverse usage throughout the New Testament. While the flexibility of the word allows the New Testament authors to adapt its meaning to their specific context, its seemingly fluid meaning often creates confusion for readers. Due to the term’s varying definitions and a lack of clear exposition, readers must often resort to their preexisting understanding of “glory” to provide meaning as they approach the biblical text.

In the absence of a biblical theology of glory, it becomes perilously easy to neglect the wide range of meaning for δόξα, or to merge all of its meanings into one hopelessly vague definition. This thesis demonstrates the inadequacy of either approach and provides reliable ways of understanding the term that bring great peace and freedom to the reader. By analyzing each occurrence of δόξα in the New Testament and placing them into domains, this thesis offers readers a starting point for personal study and a loose framework through which δόξα can be understood. The discussion revolves around three primary domains for “doxa.”

In the first domain, δόξα as a state of physical appearance, readers consider “glory” as a visibly brilliant appearance indicating honor and status. This is perhaps the most popular perception of glory, as many prominent biblical passages utilize δόξα in this way. The discussion offers several key examples of “glory” as a divine radiance, including Luke’s account of God’s glory appearing to the shepherds and Christ’s glorification at the Transfiguration. In addition, δόξα as brilliance appears in 1 Corinthians 3, as Paul references physical glory in his comparison between the old and new covenants symbolized through Jesus and Moses. However, the New Testament’s use of δόξα in nonspiritual contexts also falls in this domain. Overall, the physical

aspect of radiant glory communicates the honor and status of its source. Specifically in terms of God, his manifest brilliance indicates his holiness, power, and divine nature.

The next section of the paper addresses δόξα as an indicator of God's presence and character. In Acts 2, Stephen expounds upon God's ongoing presence among the nation of Israel shortly before experiencing this glory himself. Similarly, God can reveal his nature through δόξα, glory understood as a miraculous work, or conversely, his δόξα can be revealed through a spiritual sign. These signs ultimately point to the very heart of God and serve as revelations of the fullness of his power, his complete moral goodness, and his plans to redeem and restore his Creation.

The third and final section of the paper is dedicated to δόξα as status. Sometimes this domain refers to δόξα as general honor, sometimes as honor received upon fulfillment, and other times as honor explicitly given to God. Jesus's suffering on the cross necessarily precedes his glory and honor as the Son of God, as revealed in his encounter with the travelers to Emmaus. In fulfilling his own role as the Son of God, Christ also enables his people to fulfill their proper role as God's image bearers who can thereby enter into eternal glory. The final section of this domain describes δόξα as worship of God for his divine nature and divine character, as this is one of the most frequent uses of δόξα throughout the New Testament.

A full-bodied theology of glory, which accurately reflects its biblical meanings, is powerfully practical in its application to the Christian life. God's physical manifestations of glory inspire believers to envision the radiance of his holy, divine nature, which prompts a response of worship. It also clarifies the Christian's understanding of their own calling, which is to rely upon Christ's transforming grace to restore them as an image-bearer of God. Emulating God's presence and righteous rule within Creation fulfills humanity's original role and remains

an important aspect of the eschatological glory promised to God's church. Finally, observing δόξα as an indicator of status allows Christians to understand the heights of God's transcendence as well as his deep desire to dwell among his people. An accurate, biblically informed concept of δόξα enables the follower of Christ to fully delight in the Lord, his divine nature, and his redemptive purposes for his Creation.

## Appendix: The Domains of δόξα

### Category 1: Physical Appearance

1. δόξα as physical splendor indicating honor and status
  - a. A radiant manifestation of *God's presence* and *divine nature*: Luke 2:9; Luke 9:32; Revelation 21:23
  - b. A symbolic use of radiance and splendor to symbolize *Christ's divine nature*: John 1:14; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Philippians 3:21
  - c. The brilliant, holy radiance of *God's covenants* with his people: 2 Corinthians 3:7 (both occurrences); 2 Corinthians 3:8 (both occurrences); 2 Corinthians 3:9 (both occurrences); 2 Corinthians 3:10 (both occurrences); 2 Corinthians 3:11 (both occurrences)
  - d. An *angel's* radiant physical appearance indicating honor and status: Revelation 18:1
  - e. The radiant, redeemed, and holy state of *God's resurrected people*: Luke 9:31; 1 Corinthians 15:40 (first occurrence); 2 Corinthians 3:18 (second occurrence);
  - f. A *city's* physical splendor indicating honor and status: Matthew 4:8; Luke 4:6; Revelation 21:11
  - g. A *king's* physical splendor indicating honor and status: Matthew 6:29; Luke 12:27; Revelation 21:24
  - h. The physical splendor and honor of an *earthly human body*: 1 Corinthians 15:40 (second occurrence); 1 Peter 1:24
  - i. The radiance and physical splendor of *celestial bodies*: 1 Corinthians 15:41 (all occurrences)

### Category 2: A Descriptor of God's Presence and Character

1. δόξα as *God's presence* and the *divine qualities* accompanying it, namely his total power and authority (greatness) and his righteous actions and character (goodness)
  - a. *God's* supremely *divine nature* manifested in his presence: Acts 7:2; Acts 7:55; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; Titus 2:13
  - b. The *Son of Man's* *divine nature* and authority to judge manifested in his presence: Matthew 16:27; Matthew 24:30; Matthew 25:31; Mark 8:38; Mark 13:26; Luke 9:26; Luke 21:27; John 12:41
  - c. *God's presence* characterized by a *spirit of unity*: John 17:22
  - d. *God's presence* characterized by *holiness and power*: Revelation 15:8
2. δόξα as *God's divine, holy nature*, as evidenced by his absolute power and his righteous actions/character: John 2:11; John 11:40; Romans 3:7; Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 2:8; 2 Corinthians 1:20; Ephesians 1:6; Ephesians 1:12; Ephesians 1:14; Ephesians 1:17; Ephesians 3:16; Philippians 4:19; Colossians 1:11, 2 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Timothy 1:11; Hebrews 1:3; James 2:1; 1 Peter 1:11; 1 Peter 4:14; Jude 24

### Category 3: Status/Praise

1. δόξα as *honor, greatness, esteem, and respect*: Luke 14:10; John 7:18 (both occurrences); Acts 12:23, 2 Corinthians 6:8; Philippians 3:19; Colossians 1:27 (first occurrence) 1 Thessalonians 2:6; Hebrews 9:5
2. δόξα as *a state of significant honor* and status given for the righteous fulfillment of one's proper role
  - a. *Christ's* honor and status as the Son of God and eschatological ruler over Creation: Mark 10:37; Luke 24:26; John 5:41; John 8:50; John 8:54; John 17:5; John 17:24; John 8:54; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:9; Hebrews 3:3; 1 Peter 1:21; 1 Peter 4:13; 2 Peter 1:17 (first occurrence)
  - b. *Israel's* honor and status fulfilled through Christ: Luke 2:32
  - c. The honor of *God's redeemed, resurrected people* who carry out their original purpose of bearing God's image in Creation: John 5:44 (second occurrence); John 12:43 (second occurrence); Romans 1:23; Romans 2:7; Romans 2:10; Romans 3:23; Romans 5:2; Romans 8:18; Romans 8:21; Romans 9:4; Romans 9:23; 1 Corinthians 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:43; 2 Corinthians 4:17; Ephesians 1:18; Ephesians 3:13; Colossians 1:27 (second occurrence); Colossians 3:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Timothy 2:10; Hebrews 2:7; Hebrews 2:10; 1 Peter 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1; 1 Peter 5:4; 1 Peter 5:10 (debatable about presence, but following verses suggest that glory is a state of the redeemed people); 2 Peter 1:3 (you may become partakers of the divine nature); Revelation 21:26
  - d. A state of honor one *person* seeks from another: John 5:44 (first occurrence); John 12:43 (first occurrence)
3. δόξα as the *fullness of honor and praise given to God* for his divine character/actions: Luke 2:14; Luke 17:18; Luke 19:38; John 11:4; Romans 4:20; Romans 11:36; Romans 15:7; Romans 16:27; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 4:15; 2 Corinthians 8:19; 2 Corinthians 8:23; Galatians 1:5; Ephesians 3:21; Philippians 1:11; Philippians 2:11; Philippians 4:20; 1 Timothy 1:17; 2 Timothy 4:18; Hebrews 13:21; 1 Peter 4:11; 2 Peter 3:18; Jude 25; Revelation 1:6; Revelation 4:9; Revelation 4:11; Revelation 5:12; Revelation 5:13; Revelation 7:12; Revelation 11:13; Revelation 14:7; Revelation 16:9; Revelation 19:1; Revelation 19:7
4. δόξα as *a person who* (or an object that) *displays the excellence of another being*: Matthew 19:28; 1 Corinthians 11:7 (both occurrences), 1 Corinthians 11:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:20
5. δόξα as a *name for God* which communicates the fullness of his divine nature, his goodness, and his total power: 2 Peter 1:17 (second occurrence)
6. δόξα as a term for celestial, angelic beings: 2 Peter 2:10; Jude 8

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