



THE BIBLE'S STORY for HonorShame contexts

“So the honor is for you who believe...” -1 Peter 2:7a

CREATION

God has existed for all of eternity in full glory and honor. He is pure, faithful, and powerful - displaying all the marks of honor. To magnify his grand reputation, he created the world. He spoke order from chaos and life from death.

He deemed all facets of creation praiseworthy and acceptable. At the center of this 'good' world was Adam - whom God uniquely crowned with honor and glory. As God's esteemed vice-regents, they were given a special position and function in overseeing the creation. This arrangement exalted both God (whose faithful patronage would be displayed throughout the universe) and humans (as they were exalted from dirt to a position of reverence). Humanity had no shame, as God bestowed honor upon them.

SIN

But, humans forfeited their divinely-conferred status to pursue a self-earned honor. Adam and Eve disobeyed the covenantal terms - you honor God with loyalty, and He will honor you with status. This disloyalty disrespected their heavenly Father and brought shame upon themselves. Their response reveals the severity of their shame - they hid from God, covered themselves, and were ultimately banished from the Garden.

As descendants of Adam, we inherit their original shame. Then, perpetuate it with our defiling and disloyal hearts. This shame now defines and directs human identity and behavior. Sin (in the form of abuse, anger, gossip, racism, war, etc.) is humanity's illegitimate attempt to cover shame and restore honor. Agonized by chronic weakness and unworthiness, humans manufacture false status, often by shaming others. Having lost our face, family, identity, value, name, and status, our life became a perpetual effort to construct a counterfeit honor. As the tower of Babel illustrates, humanity seeks to promote a name for itself and exalt itself up to the heavens.

ISRAEL

But God initiates the re-creation of an honorable people to bear witness to His glorious and faithful patronage. God promises exaltation (i.e., name, land, blessing, descendants) to Abraham, and positions him as the mediator of global honor. He then rescues Abraham's descents from slavery in Egypt to kingship in Canaan. Israel was the most prized nation of the world, the apple of God's eye and treasure of God's heart. However, their perpetual disloyalty disgraces God among the nations, and results in their own banishment to shame. Israel is Adam re-lived; first selected for honor,

disgraced for treason, then banished into exile. Even though Israel's story ends tragically, promises and episodes of divinely-initiated exaltation (i.e., Ruth, Daniel, David, and Esther) foreshadow a greater intervention to rescue humanity from shame to honor.

JESUS

Jesus, eternally glorious and honored in heaven, assumes human shame at the incarnation. He became shame to rescue the shamed. In his life, Jesus shatters dehumanizing shame and mediates divinizing honor. Jesus' restorative healings and radical table fellowship restores the status of marginalized people by removing their alienating stigmata. In his teaching, Jesus proclaims an alternative honor code, condemning socio-religious fabrications of status and explaining the countercultural means to true, eternal honor. His loyalty brings honor to God and brokers honor to humanity.

Jesus' subversive engagement threatened the earthly honor of established leaders. So they respond by marginalizing him with torture, condemnation, ridicule, stripping, and crucifixion, all publicly and shamefully. At the cross - a public spectacle of grand ignominy - Jesus faithfully endured humanity's shame. God's honor was restored; Adam's shame was fully covered; the power of shame was broken. Then God publically approved of Jesus' shame-bearing death by exalting him to resurrected life, receiving a place and name above all others. Whereas Adam and Israel failed, Jesus succeeded in being truly human - honored and honoring.

SALVATION

Jesus defeated the power of shame and released God's new-creation honor. Those who turn away from the games of social-manipulation and status-construction and trust fully in Jesus for a new status have their shame covered and honor restored. Membership into God's family is not based on ethnic distinction and religious purity, but by one's brotherly allegiance to the crucified Messiah. Our old status as unclean, worthless, orphaned outsiders has been transposed to pure, worthy, and honorable children. Those who follow Christ in the cross (by scorning cultural shame) will also follow him into resurrection glory.

Being freely welcomed into God's family allows people to freely welcome and accept others, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, racial background, or any other socio-cultural classification. Moreover, Christians are now empowered to freely bear shame, knowing they already possess an eternal honor from God. Upon Jesus' return, unbelievers will be stripped of all worldly honors and condemned to everlasting shame; believers will receive crowns of eternal honor.

Explanation: This retelling of Scripture's salvation-history emphasizes how humanity sources honor, it is either graced by God or fabricated through culture. Other potential biblical motifs for honor-shame contexts include: family, face, sonship, purity, power, or exiled aliens.

