

The God of the Mountains (7)

The Mount of Transfiguration

Three of the Gospel writers, Matthew (17:1-8), Mark (9:1-8) and Luke (9:28-36), record the occasion when then Lord Jesus took Peter, James and John up into a mountain and was transfigured before them. The word, “*transfigured*”, means to be changed into another form.

It is interesting to note that this scene took place some days after Peter’s response to the Lord’s question, “*whom say ye that I am*”. Peter confessed “*thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matt. 16:16). The Lord Jesus later stated, referring to the display of His glory that would be revealed to His disciples, “*There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till the see the Son of man coming in his kingdom*” (Matt. 16:28).

The life of the Lord Jesus here on earth was marked by manifestations of His glory in one form or other. The shepherds who kept watch over their flocks by night, received a visitation from an angel who announced the birth of the Saviour. The Scriptures record, “*the glory of the Lord shone round about them*” (Luke 2:8-12).

John wrote of the One who is the eternal Word, who was made in the likeness of men, “*and the Word was made 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*” (Jn. 1:14).

Concerning the miracle that the Lord Jesus performed of turning water into wine, John recorded, “*this beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee; and manifested forth his glory*” (Jn. 2:11). The prophet Isaiah had a vision of the Lord, “*high and lifted up*”. He heard the seraphim exclaim, “*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory*” (Isa. 6:1-3).

On the mount of transfiguration, the disciples watched in wonder as their Master and Lord was transfigured before them. Matthew records that His face shone as the sun and His raiment was white as the light (Matt. 17:2). Mark described His raiment as, “*shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth could white them*” (Mk. 9:3). Luke explained that the fashion of His countenance was altered and His raiment was white and glistening (Luke 9:29).

In the book of the Revelation, John described a similar vision which he saw of the person who walked in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, or lampstands. His head and his hairs were as white as snow and His eyes were as a fame of fire; His countenance was as the sun shining in his strength (Rev. 1:13-17).

The disciples had never seen such a display of regal splendour and glory as they saw on that occasion on the mountain. The scene was a preview of the glory of the Lord Jesus that will be manifested when He returns to set up His millennial kingdom. The Lord Jesus referred to that time when He will come to set up His kingdom, “*they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*” (Matt. 24:30).

In the book of Esther, we read that king Ahasuerus showed the riches of his glorious kingdom one hundred and eighty days (Est. 1:4). There is coming a day when the Lord Jesus will reign as supreme ruler over all kingdoms. Isaiah prophesied of the future eternal reign of the Lord Jesus, “*Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever*” (Isa. 9:7). John wrote, “*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever*” (Rev. 11:15).

This manifestation of the glory of the Lord Jesus proved beyond question His absolute deity and equality with God the Father. It was also evidence of the Father's divine approval of His beloved Son.

We might remember that when Noah sent the dove out of the ark, it kept coming back, because it found no resting place. When the earth was finally dry, evidence of the fact that the judgment of God had passed, the dove went out and did not return, for it had found a place of rest (Gen. 8:8-12).

After being baptised, the Lord Jesus came out of the water, a picture of His resurrection, the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and rested upon Him. Then, a voice from heaven declared, *"this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matt. 3:16)-17. The dove could find no other, among all of humanity to rest and remain upon. The Son alone, was the object of the Father's delight, who ever bought pleasure to Him.

While the Lord Jesus was bathed in splendour and glory, Moses and Elias (Elijah) appeared with Him. It has been suggested the Moses represents all those who have died in Christ and Elijah represents all those believers who will be living when the Lord Jesus returns in rapture for all those who have been redeemed by His precious blood.

Another thought is that Moses represents the law and Elias (Elijah) represents the Old Testament prophets. Both the law and the prophets point forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus in incarnation at His first advent and to His coming in glory to set up His millennial kingdom.

It is very interesting and instructive to note the conversation between the Lord Jesus and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The Scriptures record the Lord Jesus asking, *"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"*. Then the sacred writer says, *"and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself"* (Luke 24:26-27).

In Luke's account of the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus, he tells us that Moses and Elijah appeared with Him and spoke of His decease which He would accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:30-31). The word, *"decease"*, means, *"departure"*. Shortly before his death, the apostle Paul said, *"the time of my departure is at hand, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"* (2nd Tim. 4:6-7).

The Lord Jesus said as He prayed to His heavenly Father, shortly before He departed from this world by way of the cross, *"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do"* (Jn. 17:4).

It is interesting to note that Moses and Elijah spoke with the Lord Jesus concerning the death that He would *"accomplish"*. This is the work He came to do. He said, *"I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father"* (Jn. 10:17-18).

So much was accomplished through His death. We have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son (Rom. 5:10). Through His death, He destroyed him that had the power of death and delivered us from bondage (Heb. 2:14-15). Paul reminds us in the book of Ephesians, *"in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace"* (Eph. 1:7).

Overcome with awe and not knowing what to say, Peter suggested building three tabernacles, or booths, one for the Lord and one each for Moses and Elijah. Then the cloud overshadowed them; Moses and Elijah faded away and Christ was left alone as the preeminent, glorious Son.

The Father's voice was heard to proclaim, *"This is my beloved Son, hear him"*.

The cloud that overshadowed them may have been the shekinah cloud that appeared many times as God's people journeyed through the wilderness. It represented the presence of the God of glory.

In his second epistle, Peter recalled hearing the voice and referred to it as the voice from the excellent, or majestic glory (2nd Pet. 1:16-18). We think of the words of the apostle Paul in the book of Colossians concerning the person of the Lord Jesus, *"That in all things, he might have the pre-eminence"* (Col. 1:18).

And wonder of wonders, you and I as those who have been redeemed through the precious blood of Christ, will see Him in all His regal splendour and majestic glory. He prayed to the Father, *"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me"* (Jn. 17:24).

*Bright radiance unfolding,
His garments glistening white;
We stand amazed beholding,
The regal, glorious sight.*

*In majesty excelling,
The Saviour thus arrayed;
Glory in Him dwelling,
To mortal eyes displayed.*

*Shekinah cloud surrounding,
Heaven's preeminent One;
With every grace abounding,
The Supreme, Sovereign Son.*

*The Father's declaration,
Of His supreme delight;
Is holy affirmation,
Of the Son's inherent right*

*Soon shall He come in power,
Whom every eye shall see;
For that glorious hour,
We wait expectantly*

*Bright glory all transcending
In that land most fair;
Throughout the years unending
We shall His kingdom share.*

Bernie Payne