

Heaven on Earth: The Revelation & Instructions

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Well, take your Bibles and let's go to Luke 9 this morning as we have paused our study through Titus to journey with Jesus to the cross and the tomb. We will look at what's commonly called the Mount of Transfiguration this morning. Next week, we will journey to the cross itself. Then I'll be gone for a week in South Florida preaching to a partnership church and then come back Easter Sunday for a sermon on Christ's tomb. Uh, let me just charge you and exhort you this morning to be prayerful and intentional about a classmate, a friend, a neighbor, a relative, a work associate who may not be active in a church home, maybe in between church home, just don't have one, just unconverted. The great majority of people are very open to an invitation to attend the church meeting on Easter Sunday, and ours are always, our Easter Sundays are just glorious. They're just glorious. Um, so, uh, I challenge you just to be prayerful, "God, show me that person. Open the door. Give me an open door opportunity to say, 'Hey, why don't you join us for church on Easter Sunday?'" And, uh, see how many folks we can get here. It's typically a Sunday we have a great crowd, but love to see folks come who need to know Christ.

All right, we start in Luke 9. I'm going to jump up and start in verse 26 and go down through verse 37. But let me do this first of all. This, um, what's commonly called the, uh, transfiguration, I'm entitling it "Heaven on Earth," because that's what it was for just a few moments there of Jesus being illumined by the glory that didn't come upon him, but came out from him. Peter, James and John are there. Moses and Elijah are there. God the Father appears and speaks. So you have this what I call the coronation or the installment to the office of Messiah.

Now when you think about the word "office," you think about the idea of one's duty and one's authority to perform a certain task, and God the Father had one particular unique office that had particular duties and particular authority, and there's only one being in the universe qualified to fulfill the office of Messiah, we'd say Savior maybe, And that was Jesus Christ. He came to perform a task, to fulfill a duty that God would save for himself a people and have for himself a people beginning in time and culminating and existing all through eternity. So you could outline our Lord's exercising, if you will, of the office of Messiah this way: his birth was the commencement of his work in the office of Messiah; his, uh, transfiguration that we're gonna look at this morning is the coronation of his work in the office of Messiah or Savior; his cross and resurrection is the pinnacle, the climactic point of our Lord's work in the office of Messiah or Savior; and then his ascension is the

perpetuation of the office of Messiah. He hasn't finished the work. He's up there, the Bible says, at the right hand of the Father where he ever intercedes for us.

So here we have in this mountaintop experience where Jesus is transfigured, where heaven comes to earth, in just that little small area for just a small or short amount of time, we have, if you will, a preview of what it's going to be like when he comes again in his Second Coming. You see in his first coming to the earth, he veiled his glory. Men didn't see him in his glory and majesty, and men were brash against him and bold and defiled him and denied him and insulted him, and condemned him, and finally men crucified him. But at his next coming, he won't be veiled. The word "revelation" in the book of Revelation means "the unveiling." He'll come back and he'll strip away the limitations of human flesh, and he'll come in all of his majesty and all of his glory and on that day, men will not be brash and bold and calloused and harsh and insulting and demeaning and denying. the Bible says they will run to the rocks and say, "Guard us from the wrath of the Lamb!"

That's when he comes unveiled but here in these few moments on the cross, we see the kingdom of God and some of its glory in the earth for this short period of time, and for these few moments when he came here we had heaven on earth. It allowed these disciples to see Jesus and his coming death from heaven's perspective. Jesus has just recently mentioned that he's going to Jerusalem to die. They heard that part well. They didn't hear the part about rising again. They couldn't, after they heard "die" they couldn't get over that part. So this is a great encouragement and an instruction to these disciples about how heaven views the coming crucifixion of our Lord and their Lord.

Now let's read the text together, alright? Verse 26, Luke 9. Jesus said,

26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Now so here Christ, verse 26, is shines forth there's a great, glorious day coming in the future. But verse 27,

27 "But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God [that is, and see something of that glory]. 28 Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and 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 standing with Him.

It is just kind of humorous to me. Here goes, Peter,

33 And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah" not realizing what he was saying.

Peter just had to say something, "Oh, this sounds like a good thing to do, we'll build a tabernacle for You, Moses and Elijah." Well, but God the Father's got something to say about all of this. Verse 34,

34 While he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son; 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. 37 On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him.

So here we have this heaven on earth and we have these unveiling of Christ before these disciples for just a brief moment of time, his glory shining through. But this this this is quite an instructive event, and that's what I want to build on this morning. And note that we have Peter, James and John, not the rest of the 12 and that's very significant. Peter, James and John were the only ones invited to the sick room of Jairus's daughter where he raised her from the dead. Peter, James and John will be the only ones invited to the garden of Gethsemane when the Lord is agonizing over his coming death on the cross. So these were the leaders of the leadership team, if you will. God always designs his leadership team with a leader or leaders among the leaders and clearly that's what Peter, James and John are, and as the New Testament unfolds in the book of Acts, we see again James and Peter and John is kind of associate to them leading the effort of the church's work among the Jewish people.

Now they're on a mountain, the Bible says. We don't know which mountain it was. There were several peaks around that area of Capernaum, and they're not huge mountains perhaps, what we would think about, like the Rocky Mountains, but a high place. But Jesus often would get away to these high places to get away from the crowds and seek his Father and yield himself fully to his Father's will, not that he ever didn't yield himself, but in his human form he continually laid himself before the Father. Reminds me of something maybe practical for us at this point. Peter, James and John felt and saw and experienced something of the glory of God. If you want the glory of God, get away with God in prayer. Say, "I'm dry and I'm empty and the joys not there." Well, have you fought it out with God in a remote, solitary place? You get what you work for sometimes as far as his closeness and his intimacy.

So here in this heaven on earth experience, this revelation, this unveiling of Christ on the earth for this brief period, we find something that's very instructive. First of all, I., it's very instructive concerning his preeminent majesty. It's very instructive concerning his

preeminent majesty. It was very important that Peter, James and John get a a brief glimpse of who this is that they have turned their lives over to, the one that they're calling Lord. So they see something of his majesty. The the word "majesty" means supreme. It means sovereign power. It means all authority. It means the highest of dignity, the greatest of splendor. For example, our world today speaks of majesty, but nothing compares to Jesus' majesty. The world looks at earthly kings and queens, and we refer to them by "Your Majesty." And I guess there's some propriety to that because God himself did ordain earthly authority but it is God's design that there be rulers and authorities for science, for society, to function in an orderly way and in righteousness. So many of these are not righteous, but that's what God had ordained and intended. But while the majesty we know on earth is dulled and corrupted by sin, all majesty is a reflection, though an imperfect and weak reflection, but it is a reflection of his majesty, his glory. Man may share in his majesty, and man has certainly marred his majesty, but there is only one truly majestic person, and that's Jesus Christ.

In this time of transfiguration, Mark uses that very word. It's the word we get the English word metamorphosis from, the transformation of a caterpillar and caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly. So Jesus just radically changed from the inside out. He was shone forth as radically different during those moments. For these brief moments, his deity illumined his humanity. He came to earth to wear the garments of humility and a servant but for this moment he assumes coronation robes. The disciples needed to see that because soon they would see him on the cross. They needed this to carry them over.

Verse 29 uses a phrase, look at it there, the last phrase, "His clothing became white and gleaming." The literal Greek there means the piercing whiteness of an extended flash of lightning. You've seen a storm when there was just an unusually large and powerful bolt of lightning and it's like it's stuck into the earth and it stayed there for three or four seconds and it's just piercing. That's what he's saying here, that there was a piercing brightness that illumined out of Christ, and it just kind of kept kind of shaking before them. The Bible says they had terror and they were afraid of this illumination of Jesus Christ. His majesty is so piercing in glory while on the earth, what do you think it's going to be like when we see the complete unveiling of his majesty in heaven? Oh my goodness. And we'll have eyes to take it in. You can't see it with our human eyes. In a moment, we'll talk about how the cloud sheltered them from the Shekinah glory of God the Father as he appeared and spoke on the mountain because they couldn't handle the glory of God in their fallen unglorified state. Oh, there's something great waiting for us, brothers and sisters in Christ, far beyond what I can see, and ear can hear, and mind can comprehend, and heart can even take in.

Psalm 104:2 says that he clothes himself in light like a garment, and we know that in various points throughout Jesus' earthly Ministry, he he set forth a splash of his deity as his at his birth, born of a virgin, a splash of his deity at his baptism, God the Father speaks and the the Holy Spirit descends on him as a dove, at his resurrection a splash of his deity, as his ascension a splash of his deity and here on this mountain where heaven comes to earth for a little while a splash of his deity. The Bible says in Revelation 21:23 that when he returns there'll be no need of the sun or the moon because the lamp is the

lamb. When when Jesus revelation, when Jesus comes in total unveiled nature, the old heaven and earth is removed and all things are made new. The sun and the moon will just be embarrassed. "There's no need for us to try to shine anything." The lamp is the Lamb. His brilliance will fill all the universe.

The Scriptures want us to contrast this with the metaphor of Satan's kingdom of darkness. Jude 1:6 tells us, "And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day." 1 Peter 2:9 reminds us, "But you," Christian, "are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light."

These disciples and all of us disciples, we need the instruction of this heaven on earth experience, the instruction where we're instructed about his preeminent majesty but, secondly, not only that but notice also we're instructed as to his preeminent ministry. We see this in verses 30 through 35, that his ministry was not like any other. It is supreme and superior. All other legitimate ministries pointed to him and his ministry. In verse 30 you have the word behold, "And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah." The word "behold" means "profound astonishment" like, "Can you believe this? Can you believe this? Moses and Elijah have been dead forever, and here they are in resurrected glory standing before us."

Let's think about these two witnesses of heaven, these two who came to pronounce the great person and work of Jesus Christ, and we're reminded that Elijah and Moses appear in honor of Christ to remind us that every single saint that ever lives lives to honor Christ. He is the preeminent one and his is the preeminent ministry.

Moses, for example, Moses did not get to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land because under law he failed the law and he was not permitted to enter. However, we find out that even though the law condemned him, in grace he did pass over the Jordan of death and make it into heaven because here he is alive and glorified. What the law cannot do, weak as it was the Bible tells us, he does through his love and his grace and his forgiveness. So the law forbade his passage into Canaan, but grace through Jesus Christ, provided Moses' entrance into heaven and here he is.

And Elijah, the chief of the Old Testament prophets, the great miracle working prophet of the Old Testament. He's kind of the head of all the prophets of old. The Bible tells us he didn't go to heaven through the door of death. He was raptured up in a blaze of glory. So here we have those pictured who die and go through the graves are channeled into heaven, and we have those who will be raptured and go right straight up into the presence of God in the heavens of heavens both testifying here on this day as heaven comes on earth for the short period.

Now we get to verses 32 and 33 and Peter and his companions, verse 32, "had been overcome with sleep." This seems to happen a lot to these guys. I I don't know about you, but often I'll pray my way to sleep and it's almost like Satan doesn't want us to pray so he

let's just go to sleep. These guys are asleep. They become fully awake. They're groggy. They're waking up. Last part of verse 32, "they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus," again it's just humorous to me, "Master, it is good for us to be here." You know, I just wanna say, "Peter, shut up." I mean, this is just no time for humans to be talking. You ever been around somebody that just have to say something when they're nervous and anxious? That's why Peter, he's just nervous and anxious, terrified and he's gotta talk. Yeah, maybe I need to look in the mirror now and then. You too. You too. "Let's make three tabernacles. Lord, I'll make one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." Well, the Bible tells us that's not exactly what God had in mind.

Verse 35, "Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!'" In other words, Peter, Elijah and Moses are here to testify of Jesus. They're here to point to Jesus. They're here in subservience to Jesus. "He's my Son. He is My Chosen One, My One and only Son." That's what the word "only begotten Son of God" means, "My One and unique only Son." There's no one else like Jesus.

So Peter suggesting these three equal tabernacles, now the the Feast of Tabernacles was coming up so maybe Peter just thought, "We'll just have our own Feast of Tabernacles up here. How could you beat Moses and Elijah hanging out with us for the Feast of Tabernacles." But you see, Jesus is not on the same level as Moses and Elijah. Jesus is not looking for a tabernacle to reside in. His next abode will be in the throne, or rather on the throne of heaven at the right hand of the Father. Moses and Elijah had rightful places of honor for the role they had in God's purposes, but they cannot sit on heaven's throne. Only Jesus can do that. And like all the other saints, they will gladly bow before Jesus who rightfully sits on the throne. As Paul wrote to the church at Colossae in Colossians 1:18, that in all things he must have the preeminence.

His ministry's not like Elijah. His ministry's not like Moses. His ministry go to the cross and purchase the souls of God's children for all time and eternity. Moses and Elijah in faith look forward to the coming of Christ who would come and die for them and cleanse them of sin. All of us today look back to the coming of Christ who died for us, and who saves us from our sins, but we all come to Christ. His ministry is preeminent above all others. Their ministries pointed to him.

Now, if you will, look at the third main thing here, the third instructive, this this heaven on earth experience instructs us about his humility. His humility. We, uh, understand looking at verse 33 that Peter did not want this wondrous event to end. Seems like he just wanted to stay there but the problem is it's not time for the permanent glorification of the earth. I mean, the earth hadn't been cleansed and purged of sin and evil yet. It's not gonna be glorified, glorified until it's first cleansed then it will be a new heaven and a new earth, the Bible says. It wasn't time for the permanent glorification of earth. This is but a brief preview to be instructive to the disciples and to us today of who Jesus is, who this is that they're going to see dying on the cross in just a few days. The point is that Christ and the disciples must leave this mountaintop experience, this heaven on earth, and must go down to the earth.

Think for a moment of how Moses pointed to God's moral law and God's ceremonial law and Elijah was the great miracle working prophet, but they're both here to magnify the greatness of Christ's work in Christ's ministry. When the Bible says that, uh, where is it there in verse 31, "who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish," his departure is speaking of his coming death. Now again, Moses had an unusual departure. Matter of fact, the angel and Satan fought over Moses' body. We don't know exactly what happened, but God, in effect, buried Moses' body, then Elijah is raptured up into glory, but the superiority of Jesus and the great humility of Christ to go to the cross, no departure was like Christ's departure. Moses and Elijah successful departure into heaven depended upon Christ's particular humble departure on the cross. Though Moses and Elijah are here speaking of his departure, not speaking of his miracles, not speaking of his teaching as powerful and important as that was but speaking of his coming death, burial and resurrection, this is the climactic event of all history. This is the culmination of all the law and the prophets. Those who study the Old Testament and miss the dying and suffering Savior miss absolutely everything. Jesus' death and resurrection was the scope of the Old Testament economy. His death is the highway to the throne. Moses and Elijah's ministers were temporary. They point to Jesus humbling himself, dying on a cross and his as a ministry that endures forever. They speak of his coming death because the law and the prophets demanded the death of a holy one that the children could be purchased and forgiven. Moses held the office of lawgiver. Elijah held the office of prophet. But Jesus holds the preeminent office of Messiah. They are the type. Jesus is the antitype. They are the shadow. Jesus is the substance. Their ministries pointed to this day of salvation where he sealed our glorification in his resurrection and now he's seated at the right hand of God and ever intercedes for us.

So here Jesus is after this preeminence and then the humility of, "We're not staying on the mountain, guys. We've got to go back down there to the earth." You know, there's a real pattern of that today in a lot of churches. They want, um, they want us to have heaven down here on the earth and then heaven in heaven too. Now we have some mountaintop experiences. Praise God for those, amen? Some sweet and blessed seasons, but those aren't promised. Your purpose in life can't be to be happy because happiness is not always there. You gotta have a bigger purpose than that and Christ is the ultimate big purpose to have in life, honoring him, serving him, advancing his kingdom.

Peter says, "Lord, let's build a tabernacle for You and a tabernacle for Moses and a tabernacle for Elijah, and we'll just hang right here." Peter, for the moment, wants the glory without Golgotha. He wants the crown without the cross. He wants heaven on earth and then heaven in heaven too. And too many preachers today are trying to sell that kind of nonsense, making the Sunday service some sort of pep rally where it's up and blessed and exciting every week. The pattern in Scripture is seasons of service along with suffering and then the glory.

Hebrews 13:14 reminds us, "For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come." We're not home yet. This is not the place of glory and mountaintop experiences all the time, that we're not there yet, we're seeking for another

home, another town, another city, if you will, as the text says here. By leaving this mountain in his deep humility, leaving the glory behind, the apostles are instructed in the nature of their ministry and the nature of Christ's ministry, that is, that we humble ourselves during this pilgrimage to be obedient to the will of our Father. Jesus is not going to stay on this mountaintop and in this glory. His work for now is down in the valley where he will humbly enter the valley of betrayal and he will humbly enter the valley of false accusation, and he will humbly enter the valley of sham justice, and he will humbly enter the valley of brutal beating, and he will humbly walk through the valley of hatred and shame and reproach, and he will humbly walk through the valley of agonizing death through crucifixion. The Bible says, in effect, he became obedient to death, even death on a cross. This instructs us of his humility.

They came down from the mountain which is what very clearly the text says, um, in verse 37, "On the next day, when they came down." There's a figure there. The mountaintop, the real work still before them was down below. And of course, the apostles, like their Lord, had to accept the oppositions, the persecutions that they would face following Christ in this Antichrist world. And you know, it is true in balance that we do know something of a glory here in the earth but it's a created glory and it's dimmed by the present curse of sin. I was studying one morning this week, and while in my study the sun shone brilliantly through the windows there, and I felt the warmth and the sun's rays were so bright and I thought there's a glory in that but it's not even to be compared with the glory when Christ is unveiled. Glories we know down here are dimmed and dulled and corrupted by sin, even though they originated in their original glorified one, but one day we will see him in all of his glory.

What a powerful and clear instruction we get here. These Jewish disciples were undoubtedly interested in what Moses and Elijah had to say, but Moses and Elijah only talk of Jesus and his coming ministry on the cross. Then, of course, the Father enters the picture and speaks up and sets everything in order and says, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him." The point is Moses is of no real concern now and Elijah has nothing further to add. Jesus is present, all others are now insignificant. Serving God and building the kingdom of God is now summed up by hearing and submitting in humility to one, and that is Jesus Christ, the one who is making all things new. Forget everyone else and hear him. Forget everyone else and show him your deepest reverence. Forget everyone else and hear him with joyful confidence. Forget everyone else and give him humble unconditional obedience. This is going to be the foundation of their ministries from now on. This is the culmination of faithful service. For now they follow him off the glorious mountain humbly to serve him in the world below.

4. The fourth instructive thing that we glean here from this heaven on earth experience is Christ and his disciples' future glory. While the time for glorification in the earth has not yet come, it is coming. It is coming. Verse 32 says for that moment, Peter, James and John saw his glory. They saw for a moment what one day all the saints of God will experience in the full and forever. It's a powerful illumination that will emanate from our Savior and infuse every one of us and it will last forever. John 17:22, "And the glory which thou hast given me, I've given it to them that they may be one just as we are one." I

don't know all that that means, but that we will be like him, and we will bask in the brilliant, Shekinah, majestic, illuminating glory of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. What awaits us is more wonderful than I can behold or mind can conceive. This mountaintop experience was a brief revelation, unveiling, if you will, of his church's future glory. The text implies, by the way, that Moses and Elijah, they were known by Peter, James and John intuitively and we'll know one another fully when we get to heaven. When we're glorified in Christ with heaven, we'll have perfected understandings, perfected minds. In this life, we experience dulled minds and some of us will become completely senile, but there we will know as we have been known.

1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be." You see, some of you saying, "I don't know if this serving Christ is worth it. I don't know if this devotion to the church is worth it. Bringing my tithes. Yeah, I don't know. You know, the world's offering so much." You can't see what it's worth yet. You can't see it yet but it's worth it. Like I could use a little glimpse of that thing that Peter, James and John got a glimpse of. It would help us probably but we have something even more, the finished Canon of Scripture whereby as this book is taught and studied and preached, he reveals himself in his glory more and more to us.

Romans 8:18 reminds us, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." You see, when you get to heaven, you don't have your glory. That stinks. You share in Christ's glory. In heaven, you don't get back the garden of Eden that Adam and Eve had, you get the righteousness and the kingdom that Christ himself built for the children. It's all better. The second creation is all better in every way, shape and fashion.

Now let me close with that image of verse 34. Peter's talking, probably shouldn't have been talking, and the Bible says a cloud formed. So there's a shield, if you will, and it began to over shadow them, the text says, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. They knew it was something holy and they knew it was something powerful. This cloud comes and, if you will, this bright whiteness of this cloud shields them from the presence of God the Father or they would have been instantly consumed in his glorious holy presence because they were not yet glorified. So I picture that in my mind as the cloud of grace. The crowd of, the cloud of grace is the one the thing, the thing that saves you from the Father's wrath. I've told you before your great problem is not seeing the devil in the world, your great problem is God who is holy and just and must punish sin, but by his own wisdom and love and his own doing in the merits of his Son he provides grace. That's a gift. Grace means something you don't deserve, something you can't earn, it's just given to you. He gives you forgiveness. He gives you pardon. He removes your guilt. That's the cloud of grace.

This cloud of grace covered them and shielded them on the mountain. What the Bible tells us about another mountain, Sinai. On Mount Sinai the the Lord was giving to Moses the law and the Bible says it was an ominous presence and there was dark clouds, and there was pounding of thunder and and and and flashes of lightning and and smoke billowing everywhere, and out of this darkness and these clouds, God's holy wrath was

on display because the law was just and all the people violated God's law and they stood condemned. They stood unclean. They stood judged. They stood guilty. That's the cloud of law.

Jesus is going to Jerusalem and there he will suffer and die in our place and darkness will descend upon him. Why? Because the requirements of the law came on Jesus and he took all the law's condemnation in that darkness. He said, it's all satisfied all the law's claim against us for judgment in that darkness. And when he died, the penalty of our sin was removed being completely extinguished in his precious body and the dark clouds of law were quickly and permanently dissipated because on the third day he arose again in bright rays of conquering grace. And everyone of you under my voice sitting in this room or anywhere else, today you're living under a cloud, you're either living under the cloud of law that says you're condemned, you're judged, you're guilty, or by turning to Christ in faith you live under the cloud of grace that says you did nothing to earn it, you did nothing to deserve it, you cannot merit it, but through Christ's work on your behalf, you're not guilty. You're no longer condemned. Your sins are forgiven. You're cleansed forever.

The cloud of law or the cloud of grace. And when you come to Jesus and trust in him, that is your mountaintop experience and that lasts forever. Even though for season we're down here in some suffering and persecution and opposition, there's glory that awaits us. Thank God for this monumental point in the ministry of Jesus. You have his birth which I call the entrance into or the consummation, if you will, of his commencement, if you will, of his messianic office. Then you have this climactic point of the transfiguration where it's something of a coronation of Christ in his messianic office. And then you have the pinnacle of all pinnacles, his cross and his resurrection. Which cloud are you under?