

A Glimpse of Glory

From Simon to Peter

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Our Father, we thank you for the blessings of the Lord's Day. We thank you for the privilege of gathering around the Lord's table in fond remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ. And, our Father, we thank thee this morning afresh for the Word of God that we hold in our hands which lives and abides forever. And, our Father, we pray that as we come afresh to thy Word that the Holy Spirit of God would take the Word of God and apply the truth of God to our hearts, oh Lord, this morning. Father, we want to hear a word from thee. We want, Lord, that you would lift us above the mundane. And, our Father, that even this morning that we might get a glimpse of our Lord Jesus Christ and that our hearts might be drawn out after him. So bless thy people who have come with varied needs. We pray, oh God, that from your Word that you would meet their every need. And, our Father, as we minister thy Word we pray that it might be in the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Oh Father, help us now as we give thee thanks in the Savior's name. Amen.

I want you to turn with me in your Bibles this morning to the second epistle of Peter, please, the second epistle of Peter chapter one and commencing to read at verse 16. And we have been making our way slowly but surely through the life of Simon Peter, the life and times of Simon Peter, a little series that we have entitled, "From Simon to Peter." And now we have come to our ninth study this morning and I want to talk to you about a glimpse of glory. And we are going to read what Peter said about his experience on the holy mount, on the Mount of Transfiguration. And then we are going to go back to Matthew's account and read the transfiguration story.

Peter writes 2 Peter 1:16:

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory,

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard.¹

When did they hear this voice? Peter identifies the place.

“...when we were with him in the holy mount.”²

Now before you leave that passage, I want you to notice some one simple thing, that Peter is presenting to us what happened on the holy mount as a preview of the second advent of Jesus Christ.

Did you notice what he said in verse 16? He says:

“...we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, [we] were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”³

In other words, what happened on the holy mount, on the Mount of Transfiguration is a preview of the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now turn back to Matthew 17, Matthew’s gospel 17. And all of the synoptic gospels—that is Matthew, Mark and Luke—record this experience on the Mount of Transfiguration. Matthew 17 and verse one”

“And after six days...”⁴

Perhaps I should start in verse 28 of chapter 16. There is a connection there. Jesus said:

“Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.”⁵

Second advent.

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;

¹ 2 Peter 1:16-18.

² 2 Peter 1:18.

³ 2 Peter 1:16.

⁴ Mathew 17:1.

⁵ Matthew 16:28.

hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.⁶

A glimpse of glory.

Those of you who have had the exciting pleasure of flying in an airplane will know the beauty that is to be seen above the clouds. One often leaves the dull light of the airport, climbs into the thickness of the clouds until suddenly the sunshine streams through the plane and you look into the blueness of the sky and you see the cotton wool clouds making a beautiful carpet beneath. It is breathtaking, is it not?

Well, this morning I want to take you above the clouds with Peter and two of the other disciples who were given the privilege of being with the Lord Jesus on the holy mount.

Now we don't know what mountain they were at. Some scholars tell us that it was Mount Tabor. Others tell us that it was Mount Hermon which actually overlooks Caesarea Philippi. Wherever it was is not the important thing. That it did happen is the important thing.

Let's not forget the context of Matthew 16 and Matthew 17. The Lord Jesus had been presenting one hard fact after another. He had told them what messiahship entailed, the necessity of his death, his suffering, his pain in the city of Jerusalem. And when Peter protested shortly about this, the Lord exposed the fact that Peter was under the influence of Satan. Christ went on to say that he must die and that we must die, too, because, he said, if we are going to be his followers, we have got to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow him.

The Lord Jesus had been presenting his disciples with one fact after another. But now the time had come for a different type of teaching. And so the Savior summons his three most intimate disciples to come in to come to him unto a high mountain. And somewhere on the slopes of this unnamed mountain the glorious event of the transfiguration of Christ took place.

You say, "Why? Why did Christ allow his disciples the privilege of seeing his glory and witnessing his glory at this particular time?"

Was it because that the Lord wanted to clear up Peter's present spiritual confusion? Was the Lord Jesus confirming through this transfiguration that the confession that Peter had made at Caesarea Philippi when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God,"⁷ was he confirming that Peter's confession was right? Was the Lord Jesus teaching through this glorious event that his teaching about his death and suffering in the city of Jerusalem was in perfect harmony with the plan of God? Or perhaps the Lord was

⁶ Matthew 17:1-8.

⁷ Matthew 16:16.

showing through this event that the purpose of his mission to planet earth was the cross, because Luke tells us that when they were with him in the holy mount that Moses and Elijah and the Savior were talking about his decease, his exodus, his death at the place called Calvary.

Whatever the reason, one thing is absolutely sure. This phenomenal event was never forgotten by these disciples who witnessed it. The transfiguration of the Lord Jesus helped James face a martyrs death when he was beheaded by Herod.

John referred to the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus in the prologue to his gospel. He says:

“ And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory).”⁸

Where did John behold the glory of Christ, but when he was with him in the holy mount? And, my friends, Peter could never forget the glory of it all. Thirty years later he penned these words, “We were eyewitnesses of his holy majesty when we were with him in the holy mount.”

I wonder, have you ever had an experience when you just seemed to be lifted above the world and allowed to get foretaste of the heavenly world. You see, there are times in our Christian experiences when we need spiritual refreshment. We need to get on higher ground. We need to get above the mundane and we need to let God speak to our hearts in a special way. That is what happened to these disciples in the mount of transfiguration.

Now all that I want you to do with me this morning is climb this holy mount, whether it was Tabor or Hermon. I want us to climb this holy mount and I want us to get this morning glimpse of glory.

Look at Matthew 17. Notice, first of all, a person that should captivate our souls. All that trills my soul is Jesus.

Let me pause. I wonder as a Christian does the Lord Jesus still thrill your soul? Does Christ still thrill your soul? What is it about Christ that should captivate our souls? Will this transfiguration event soon settle two aspects of the Lord Jesus Christ? First of all, it speaks very clearly about the majesty of his person.

Peter’s testimony was this. “We were eyewitnesses of majesty.”

Each gospel writer translates the transfiguration in a different way. Matthew says:

“... his face did shine as the sun,”⁹ verse two.

⁸ John 1:14.

⁹ Mathew 17:2.

Mark reports that his garments became glistening, intensely white as no fuller cloth dresser on earth could bleach them.

Luke testifies as he dread the fashion of his countenance was altered.

John says:

“...we beheld his glory.”¹⁰

Now when the Lord Jesus Christ was transfigured, he was not put into the spotlight where he really is at glory. Rather, he was not put in the spotlight where he reflected glory. Rather he radiated glory.

The Greek word for transfiguration gives us our English word “metamorphosis.” And, of course, you know that a metamorphosis is a change on the outside that comes from the inside. You see, Christ was revealing glory from within. It was intrinsic. This glory of Christ broke through the veil of his humanity. This was the glory that the Lord Jesus had before the world began. This is the glory that the Lord Jesus has presently at the Father’s right hand. This is the glory that Christ will have when he returns in power and in great glory.

You remember that when Moses came down from the mount the skin of his face shone. You remember that when Stephen stood before the Sanhedrin his face was the face of an angel. My dear friends, Moses and Stephen reflected the glory of God. They were reflecting God’s glory. But this was all together different. This was not reflected glory resting upon Christ. This was inherent glory shining forth from Christ, making Christ a brilliant light over the blackness and darkness on the mountainside. This event revealed to the disciples the majesty, the deity, the glory of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ appearing before his disciples as God. He was transfigured.

And Luke tells us when he was transfigured. He says, “As he prayed.” Christ was transfigured. Christians are to be transfigured. Paul says we are to be changed into the same image from glory to glory. That is, day by day, as we meet with God in the light of his Word and in the atmosphere of prayer, we are to be changed from one degree of glory to another. We are to reflect the glory of Jesus Christ in our lives even as the mirror reflects the face of the person who looks into it.

You say, “How can this happen?”

Through prayer, through prayer. For as Christ prayed, he was transfigured. And, my dear friends, as we prayerfully behold the glory of the Lord Jesus, we are changed into his likeness.

Do you wonder at times why you and I as Christian believers are so unlike Christ in our attitude, so unlike Christ in our action, so unlike Christ in our speech? Is it because we

¹⁰ John 1:14.

are prayerless? Is it because we have neglected the means of transfiguration? Prayer. For as Christ prayed he was transfigured.

The transfiguration even zooms in on the majesty of his person. And then the transfiguration event zooms in on the centrality of his death. Whereas the overwhelmed disciples looked at their transfigured Lord, they saw two of the greatest Old Testament leaders appear in glorious splendor and talk with the Savior.

You say, “Who were they?”

Moses, the representative of the law. Elijah, the representative of the prophets.

You say, “What were they talking about?”

Well, Luke tells us. They:

“.. spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”¹¹

That word “decease” is an interesting word. It means exodus. It means deliverance. You see, as they were with the Lord Jesus on the holy mount the subject that was on their lips was the coming Calvary. Perhaps Moses spoke of the Passover lamb or the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness. Elijah might have mentioned one of the great messianic prophecies.

Peter must have been tremendously surprised to hear Moses and Elijah talk about his death, talk about this with the Lord Jesus. For you remember that when Christ mentioned the cross to Peter he rebuked him. He said:

“Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”¹²

But now Peter discovers that heaven can talk about nothing else, nothing less than the death of Jesus Christ, the centrality of the cross.

My friends, the cross is central in the plan of God. Peter got a new vision of the centrality of Calvary on the holy mount. And, my friends, is that not what we need to today? If the cross is the central theme of heaven, it ought to be the central theme on earth. If the death of Christ is central in the plan of God, it ought to be central in the preaching of men. If Calvary was on their lips, then Calvary needs to be on our lips.

Isn't it amazing that when we meet together as Christians we talk about everything only the cross? I mean, I am rebuked here. So are you. We talk about the weather. We talk about the weddings. We talk about the holidays. We talk about everything, but Christ.

Yet Calvary was the theme of their conversation on the holy mount.

¹¹ Luke 9:31.

¹² Matthew 16:22.

I want to tell you that Calvary needs to be the theme of your praise. Calvary needs to be the theme of your testimony. Calvary needs to be the theme of our preaching. And when we stand up and, brethren, be exercised to stand up at the table, Calvary needs to be the theme of the table.

The majesty of his person, the centrality of his being. He still thrills my soul. Does he still thrill your soul? There is a person that should captivate our souls.

Look at Matthew 17 again. There is a passion that should dominate our lives. What is this passion, this desire that should dominate my life?

Well, I think it is contained in that little phrase in verse eight.

“...they saw no man save Jesus only.”¹³

You remember the cry of the Greeks.

“Sir, we would see Jesus.”¹⁴

I want to see the Lord Jesus more in my life. I want him to dominate my thinking, to control the way I spend my time. I want the Lord Jesus to be at the center of every other relationship I develop. I want Christ to control all I do and all I say.

I wonder. Are these your desires?

Would you see Jesus only? And then two things which must happen. First of all, we must hear his voice. We must hear his voice. Wasn't that the problem with Simon Peter? He needed to learn to listen to the Savior.

James says:

“...let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”¹⁵

Slow to speak. Is that you?

It certainly wasn't Simon Peter. I mean, Simon Peter had nothing to say and he said it.

Abraham Lincoln once said, “It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.”

Peter was impulsive again, verse four.

¹³ Mathew 17:8.

¹⁴ John 12:21.

¹⁵ James 1:19.

“Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.”¹⁶

Peter was mouthing his ill timed advice with a bright cloud, the shekinah glory of God overshadowed them and the Father’s voice rebuked Peter’s proposal.

The Father in heaven said, “Peter, don’t you dare put my Son on the same level as Moses. Don’t you dare put my Son on the same level as Elijah. Moses is only the representative of the law. Elijah is only the representative of the prophets. The law and the prophets are fulfilled in my Son. Hear his words. Listen to him.”

My friends, listen. If I am going to see Jesus, I tell you, I must hear his voice.

Do you know something? All of our problems emerge because we don't listen to him, because we want to impose our will and our understanding upon him. But heaven says to us as it said to Peter, “Listen to him and not to yourselves. Listen to him and all your circumstances. He is worthy to be heard. He is worthy to be obeyed. He is the prophet that should come.

Could it be that you want to seek Christ more and more in your life, but you are not prepared to do what he says, to obey him, to listen to him, to heed him?

If I am going to see Jesus Christ, I must hear his voice. But, secondly, he must fill my vision.

I wonder. Have you noticed the way this passage commences, continues and concludes? It is interesting. Look at chapter 17. First of all we have the journey of the three. Secondly we have the testimony of the two. And then thirdly we have the supremacy of the one. They saw no man save Jesus only. Christ filling their vision.

I wonder who is filling your vision this morning. Maybe it is some outstanding preacher. Maybe it is some great Christian. Maybe it is some great biography you just read or is it the Lord Jesus? The poet said:

Jesus only let me see Jesus,
Only none save he.
This my fame shall ever be,
Jesus, Jesus, only.

Does he fill your vision? Are your eyes fixed on him?

It is said of Cyrus the founder of the Persian Empire that once he captured a prince and his family and when the prince and his family were marched in before the monarch Cyrus asked the prisoner, “What will you give me if I release you?”

¹⁶ Mathew 17:4.

And the prince said, “I will give you the half of my wealth.”

And Cyrus, the governor of Persia said, or the monarch of Persia said, “Well, sir, what will you give me if I release your children?”

And the prince said, “I will give you all of my wealth.”

And Cyrus went one step further. He said, “Well, what will you give me if I release your wife?”

He said, “Sir, I will give you myself.”

And Cyrus was so moved by his devotion that he freed them all. And as they returned home, the prince said to his wife, “Wasn’t Cyrus a handsome looking man?”

And with a look of deep affection for her husband she said, “I didn’t notice him. I had only eyes of the one who was willing to give his life for me.”

Turn your eyes upon Jesus. I wonder. Is that what you need to do this morning as a Christian, just look full in his wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace. He must fill my vision.

Now I am not saying that we ought to stay on the mountaintop. That is what Peter wanted to do, verse four.

He said:

“Lord, it is good for us to be here.”¹⁷

The word “good” means beautiful, excellent, pleasing. Peter wanted to prolong this experience as long as possible. He didn’t want to think about the cross or the conflict or the crisis. He says, “Lord, wouldn’t it be better to stay on the holy mount? Wouldn’t it be better to remain in heavenly fellowship with you?”

But that is not Christ’s way. For immediately after the transfiguration Christ ascends to the ugly scene of a demon possessed, screaming, stumbling lad. He had come from the mountaintop to the multitude.

My friends, if the Lord Jesus had stayed on the mountaintop that boy would never have been delivered.

I want to tell you it is a lazy brand of Christianity when someone wants to stay with the Lord Jesus on the mountaintop, but not take the Lord Jesus to the valley.

¹⁷ Matthew 17:4.

You see, the mountain of inspiration prepares me for the valley, for the valley of experience. Is that not the balance of the Christian life? We need God. We need God in the holy place in order that we might minister for God in the marketplace.

How often we experience some mountain delight, the Sunday service. We are away at some Bible convention and Bible ministry. We are at some prayer meeting. We are at some Bible class and we have that mountaintop experience with God.

But we can't remain there. Down in the valley of your neighborhood today they are people with desperate needs. Are you prepared to roll up your sleeves and minister to them? May I remind you this morning that we are not saved to sit or saved to soak or saved to survey. We are saved to serve. And what God gives us on the mountaintop he expects us to take into the valley of human need.

There is a person that should captivate our souls. There is a passion that should dominate our lives. I must hear this voice. He must fill my vision.

But notice thirdly and very quickly there is a prospect that should alleviate our hearts. You see, this memory of the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration lived in the memory of Peter like a smoldering fire. He later referred to this experience on the mount years later. He says:

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”¹⁸

Do you see what he is saying? He is saying the scene on the mount is the picture of the second advent of Jesus Christ. What the disciples saw on the mount that day is a preview of the Lord's return.

Some time ago a man was staying at a chalet in the Swiss Alps. Early one morning he seemed to hear what sounded like an earthquake, what you and I heard in the early hours of this morning. And hurriedly he got out of bed and he ran to the front desk and he asked if some thing was wrong. He asked if the mountain was breaking up. He was scared. He was frightened.

And the man at the front desk said, “Sir, listen. We are on the west side of the mountain. As the sun comes upon on the east, the snow and the ice expand as they begin to warm and that expansion causes a large crashing noise.” He said, “Sir, it is not the end of the world. It is just the beginning of a new day.”

Aren't you glad that there is coming a new day. Aren't you glad that there is coming a new glory when Christ will come and rapture us out of this world? This is the prospect that alleviates our heart.

You say, “Why?”

¹⁸ 2 Peter 1:16.

Because it is a prospect of resurrection. Moses represents those who have fallen asleep in Christ and will be raised when the Savior comes.

You remember Paul says this. He says:

“...the dead in Christ shall rise first.”¹⁹

I wonder. Are you concerned about your loved ones who have died in Christ? I wonder. Do you feel that they will be at some disadvantage when the Lord comes? They won't. Christ will come and the dead will be raised. And when Christ comes, our holy dead return with Jesus and at that moment dust is wrought upon and soul meets body on the resurrection morn. Surely if God can bring forth a body from a womb, he can bring forth a body from a tomb.

I wonder. Have you stood at a grave recently with the tears rolling down your cheeks? My friends, the hope of the gospel this morning is this. Our holy, happy dead will rise again. There will be a resurrection. Moses. There is going to be a rapture. For you remember that Elijah was translated to heaven without having to pass through the article of death. And he represents those believers who will be caught up to meet Christ in the air, Paul says:

“...we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds.”²⁰

Think of this fact this morning. Millions of graves are dug every year, but isn't it wonderful to think that one generation of Christians will cheat the undertaker? How wonderful to think that Jim Clydesdale may never get his hands on you. I tell you, I don't want them to get their hands on me.

Isn't it wonderful to think that the dead will be raised? And the living will be raptured? What a thrill to be found preaching for Christ, living for Christ, witnessing for Christ when he appears?

Oh, joy, oh, delight should we go without dying.
No sickness, no sadness, no dread and no crying.
Caught up through the clouds with our Lord into glory,
When Jesus receives his own.

There is coming a resurrection, Moses. There is coming a rapture, Elijah. And, my dear friends, thank God there is coming a reunion.

1400 years have rolled around since Moses had died and was buried. 900 years had passed since Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And yet here they were still alive and Peter and James and John recognized them. Oh, what a moment that will be

¹⁹ 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

²⁰ 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

when we will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, when there shall be that reunion with those who have died in Christ. Oh, the joy that there awaits us when we reach the golden shore and we clasp the hands of loved ones there with them to part no more.

You know, the questions about glory. Will we know one another in heaven? Will we recognize one another? Let me ask you this. Did Peter recognize Moses? Did Peter recognize Elijah? Of course he did. And, my friends, we are going to recognize those who have died in Christ. Those eyes of ours shall once more look upon their faces and those ears shall once our ears shall hear them once more speak. We parted in sorrow, but we meet in joy. We parted in stormy weather, but we will meet in a calm harbor. And, best of all, we shall meet to part no more.

Does that not alleviate your heart this morning? Does that not comfort your wounded spirit to realize that we will be caught up together with them? Separation is the order of this day. Reunion is the order of that day, but let's not forget the most important thing. We are going to meet the Lord in the air. We are going to see Christ as he is.

Or did you notice that Moses and Elijah departed? The heavenly voice was silent. The cloud disappeared and they saw no man save Jesus only.

Is that not our prospect? Is that not our hope?

“...but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”²¹

Jesus only soon past that scene of grandeur,
But steadfast, changeless, sure are blessed transfigured nation is promised to endure.
The manifested glory of our great Lord to see,
Shall change us to his likeness as he is we shall be.

Let's bow together.

²¹ 1 John 3:2.