

## MOSES AND ELIAS

The transfiguration of Jesus in the presence of three of his disciples is a point of interest to many, not because they see its lesson and significance, but because they *do not see them*. We read that there "*appeared*" to the disciples Moses and Elias, talking with Jesus. (Matt. 17:1-9.) Our Lord was transfigured (changed in appearance). His face did shine as the sun and his raiment was white as the light. A bright cloud overshadowed and surrounded them, and a voice out of the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." "And when the disciples heard it they fell on their faces and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes they saw Jesus only."

We might wonder and speculate about how Moses and Elijah came to be on the mountain, how the disciples, who never saw either of them, could know them, etc., etc.; but all such speculation is set at rest by Jesus telling the disciples that they had seen *a vision*. As they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: "Tell *the vision* to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead." (Matt. 17:9.) To the disciples the vision seemed a reality, just as to John at Patmos the various visions recorded in Revelation were clear and distinct; but our Lord certainly *knew* all about it, and we will rest on his testimony that it was a *vision*.

To think otherwise would involve the contradiction of sundry plain Bible statements; for instance, Jesus was not yet crucified, hence had not risen from the dead, and we know that he is the "*first-born* from the dead." But if Moses had already been resurrected, our Lord Jesus was not the *first-fruits* of them that

slept. (1 Cor. 15:20.) The bringing back to life of Lazarus and others, we have heretofore shown, is not called *resurrection*, because they were not entirely delivered from the power of death – but died again.

But let us see, if we can, what lesson was taught or what important truth was illustrated by this transfiguration scene or vision. Doubtless in that way we shall see a reason for the presenting of Moses and Elijah in the vision.

Peter, who was one of those present on the occasion, mentions it in his letter long afterward. He says: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the *power and coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his *majesty*. For he received from God the Father honor 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 we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." – 2 Pet. 1:16-18.

We understand Peter to tell us, then, that the transfiguration vision was an illustration or presentation in vision of the "*majesty*" and "*power*" of his *presence* (*parousia* – here translated coming). It is, then, to be understood as representing the establishment of the Kingdom at our Lord's second *presence*. Therefore, from our standpoint, it is an illustration of the present time, in which the King is present and the Kingdom being established. Moses, we have seen, represents the *human* element of the Kingdom ("Moses, verily, was faithful in all his house as a servant" – Heb. 3:5); while Elijah represents the entire Gospel Church – the spiritual house of sons. Elsewhere we have seen that there will be these two classes in the Kingdom – an earthly and a heavenly – over all of which, the orderer of both phases, will be Christ Jesus; and this fits perfectly with the vision – Moses and Elijah, with our Redeemer in the midst, transfigured and shining.

So now, in his presence, we see not only the evidences of the spiritual Kingdom in the harvesting and sifting of the wheat, but also preparation being made for the establishment of the earthly or perfect human phase of the Kingdom. This is no cunningly devised fable, and was not only shown to Peter and others in vision, but "we have also a more sure word of prophecy," which bears the same testimony, "whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a *light that shineth* in a dark place." – 2 Pet. 1:19.

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