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A VISION OF COMING GLORY.

– MARK 9:2-13. – APRIL 17. –

Golden Text: – "A voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him."

SIX DAYS after Peter's confession that Jesus was the Messiah, and after our Lord had explained to the apostles that instead of immediate honor and glory in the world he would meet with contempt, persecution and death, and that the conditions of discipleship were willingness to suffer with him and joy in proclaiming his message, Jesus took the three leaders of the apostles, Peter, James and John, up to a high mountain – presumed to be Mt. Hermon. Luke tells us that he went there to pray, and we may reasonably suppose that the three apostles joined with him in prayer. This little prayer meeting, small in number, and the glorious result or answer to the prayers – the vision of coming glory in the Kingdom – may well be accepted as an encouragement to us all, and stimulate us to a remembrance of the Lord's injunction that we watch and pray lest we enter into temptation, and that where two or three are met in his name he will meet with them, which will insure a blessing. Frequently the blessings received are mental visions of the glorious things which the Lord hath in reservation for those who love him.

Luke says that it was while they prayed that our Lord's features and garments were transfigured: Matthew [R3345 : page 104] says that his face shone like the sun. Two others appeared on the scene, Moses and Elias, of radiant appearance, though evidently less so than our Lord. It was a vision: our Lord was not actually changed to spirit conditions until after his resurrection from the dead, but now by a miraculous power he appeared so transformed – transfigured. Moses and Elias (Hebrew, Elijah) were not actually present on the mount, for their resurrection had not yet taken place, and, as the Apostle very clearly points out, it will not take place until after the resurrection

and change of the Church, the body of Christ. His words are, "They without us shall not be made perfect." – Heb. 11:40.

We have two testimonies to the effect that this entire matter was a vision, after the same kind that John had on the Isle of Patmos, recorded in the Book of Revelation. As John saw horses, beasts, angels, men, and heard them talking, and talked himself, so in this vision the Apostle heard conversation going on about the Lord and those who appeared with him in the vision, and the words were in reference to our Lord's death at Jerusalem, of which he had already informed them six days previously. The circumstances all corroborated the thought that it was a vision; but we are not left to circumstantial evidence, for we have our Lord's plain statement to this effect. As he came down the mountain side with the three apostles, he charged them straitly, saying, "Tell the *vision* to no man until the Son of man be risen from the dead." – Matt. 17:9.

PICTURING GLORY TO FOLLOW.

The Apostle Peter, one of the three who saw the vision, refers to it in his epistle, saying, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from 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 which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." – 2 Pet. 1:16-18.

What was the object of this vision? We answer that it was to establish the faith of the apostles. The Lord took the three who saw the vision from amongst the strongest of the number, and that it did make a deep impression is evidenced by Peter's reference already quoted. It was a heart lesson for them to learn – that Jesus, the Messiah, the great King, who was to rule and to bless Israel and through Israel the world, and who was to establish them with him as

associates and joint-heirs in the Kingdom, was about to die and apparently thus to frustrate all their hopes, and about to disprove his own claims of Messiahship. The time that elapsed between the breaking of the news to them and the vision, six days after, was just about enough to permit them to discuss matters and digest the meaning of our Lord's words. Then came the vision on the mount which corroborated our Lord's testimony in both respects – the conversation of the vision corroborating his statement that he would suffer a martyr's death at Jerusalem; and the glorious vision itself, as well as the words from heaven, indicated that our Lord was indeed what he claimed to be – that they were safe in accepting him as the Messiah, that they were not being deluded by "cunning fables." The vision evidently answered its divine purpose.

"THY KINGDOM COME."

The vision itself represented the Lord's Kingdom: Moses was the representative of the Jewish dispensation, the house of servants, as in a previous lesson Elijah was shown to represent the Gospel Church in the flesh. There was glory and honor attached to the Jewish dispensation and to the Gospel dispensation, but a still greater glory was manifested in the presence of Jesus, who represented the Millennial dispensation and the divine Kingdom in glory, which shall indeed bless the whole world. Not many heard, understood, appreciated, obeyed, or sought to obey the Law given by Moses. Not many have heard, understood or obeyed, or even sought to obey the Gospel invitation; but when the glorious Millennial age shall come, when "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, all flesh shall see it together." (Isa. 40:5.) In his day the righteous shall flourish and all the families of the earth shall be blessed. In that day it shall be the will of God that all shall hear the voice of the Son of man, as expressed in the vision, "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him." Thank God, we can look forward to such a glorious time and anticipate with confidence such a glorious consummation of the ages. Thank God, also, that as those who have heard and obeyed during

this Gospel age, we are privileged to be the members of this glorious one whom the world will soon hear and by whom it will soon be blessed and every creature be granted an opportunity for the attainment of life everlasting.

The vision vanished as suddenly as it appeared, as John's visions vanished and changed from time to time. One account says that the apostles were heavy with sleep, and yet the vision seems not to have been a dream, but rather, as already stated, of the kind given to John on Patmos. The vision had a great lesson for the apostles, and as they followed Jesus down the mountain side to rejoin the waiting remainder of their number, they questioned one another respecting the rising from the dead, and what that signified. Our Lord had already mentioned to them that after he had been dead three days he should rise again, and now in the vision this had been repeated. It was evidently the divine intention [R3346 : page 105] to impress the matter of the resurrection upon their minds. Nevertheless, when the resurrection of our Lord did take place on the third day, we perceive that it was with great difficulty still that they comprehended the situation. How great would have been their difficulty had it not been for this previous instruction of our Lord and through the vision!

"HE KNOWETH OUR FRAME."

One lesson to us in this connection is that divine wisdom notes our weaknesses and needs and in advance makes full and thorough preparation for them. How comforting it is to us that the same Lord who then so carefully supervised the interests of the faithful ones, is the same yesterday, today and forever, and is equally caring for us now. This thought is brought out in the ninety-first Psalm, "He will give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." There will be no danger of the stumbling of the feet members so long as we abide faithful to the Lord. His care will be over us and we will

continue to be recognized as his members, and, as such, no provision for our interests will be neglected.

The apostles were gradually getting the thought that the Kingdom was to be deferred, and that the King and his associates in the Kingdom were to be of a higher order than the humanity they would rule and bless and uplift. They were seeing distinctly, too, that Jesus was the Messiah, and this led them to ask of the Lord whether or not the Doctors of the Law were correct in saying that the Scriptures taught that Elijah would come before the Messiah. The Lord corroborated the teaching of the scribes that Elijah must first put in an appearance for the purpose of restoring all things – for the purpose of making ready the world for the Kingdom. But the Lord pointed out that John the Baptist had served in a sense as Elijah to those who received him as the Messiah, and that instead of accomplishing a work of restoration, John as the antitype of Elijah had been slain, and that likewise Jesus himself would suffer.

Our Lord did not go on to explain to them how he and they and all of the faithful of the Church would, while in the flesh, represent the higher antitypical Elijah, and, as the Gospel Church, would endeavor to do a restorative work preparatory to the Second Advent, but without success; and that hence the inauguration of the Kingdom at the Second Advent will not be peaceable, as of happy subjects receiving a glorious kingdom, but forceful, as of a King taking possession of a realm in disobedience, in rebellion, who by force will subdue all things unto himself and reign until he shall put all enemies into subjection, the last enemy being death. It was not yet due time for the disciples to understand that from the human standpoint it would be a long period between the suffering of the Head of the body and the suffering of the last members of the body, though this same period, from the divine standpoint of a thousand years being but as yesterday, would, as Scripturally referred to, "shortly come to pass." This was one of the many things that the Lord had to tell them which they could not bear then, but which the holy Spirit has brought to

light in due time through the words of Jesus and the Apostles and the prophets. – John 16:12,13.

Let us accept the Golden Text as the very essence of this lesson, and apply it each to himself. Let us each learn to listen particularly for the heavenly direction. Let us remember that we are to hear the Lord and his chosen mouthpieces rather than to follow our own imaginations or the imaginations of other uninspired men. We may accept assistance from any one able to give it, but we are to scrutinize every helping hand and every voice to know that it is of the Lord and leads us to him and is in accord with his instructions. "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me. A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of a stranger." – John 10:5.

