

A VISION OF THE KINGDOM.

– LUKE 9:28-36. – JUNE 17. –

Golden Text: – "This is my beloved Son. Hear him."

THE SCENE on the Mount of Transfiguration, to be appreciated, must be viewed from the standpoint of our Lord's words. Eight days before, our Lord had promised his followers that some of them would not taste of death until they should see the Kingdom of God. He did not explain to them whether they would see the Kingdom in reality established in eight days or whether they would see a vision of the Kingdom. He left their minds full of wonder and expectancy, and then at the appropriate time took with him Peter, James and John, the three most prominent of the twelve apostles, who went up into the mountain, presumably Mount Hermon.

From a comparison of the accounts some have surmised that possibly the Lord and the apostles remained in the mountain all night, as Jesus sometimes did, away from the multitude, in quiet, in prayer. In one of the accounts we are told that the apostles were heavy with sleep, and the inference seems to be that they were awakened at the proper time to see the vision; that its glorious grandeur was too great for them; that they fell upon their faces in fear, which was increased as a very dense, black cloud enveloped them, and when they heard a voice in the cloud saying, "This is my beloved Son: Hear him." One account shows that it was necessary for the Lord to touch the apostles, saying, "Arise, and be not afraid."

JESUS SAID IT WAS A VISION

So far as the apostles were concerned everything that they saw was so actual, so real, that they supposed the whole matter

actual, just as John in the visions of Revelation saw, heard, spoke, etc., and just as Paul explains that [R3793 : page 183] in one of his visions matters were so real that he could not have told whether he was in the body or out of the body – whether he was still on earth having a vision or whether he had actually been taken away for a time and shown realities. Thus it is with all visions: their every detail is as actual and as perfect as though it were a fact. Our assurance that this transfiguration was a vision is in our Lord's words: "And as they were coming down from the mountain Jesus commanded them, saying, Tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen from the dead." When we have our Lord's direct statement that it was a vision it would be folly for us to perplex ourselves to explain it upon any other theory or hypothesis, such, for instance, as wondering how Moses and Elias could be there without a resurrection, especially when it is remembered that Jesus was the first to rise from the dead, "the firstborn from the dead." – Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18.

THE MEANING OF THE VISION

Our Lord's words of eight days previous show clearly that the vision was intended to be a foreshowing of the glories and honors of the Kingdom in some sense of the word. It represented then the Son of man coming into his Kingdom – into his dominion. Peter, one of those who saw the vision, informs us that he got this lesson from it – that he was persuaded respecting the majesty of Jesus, of his dignity as the Messianic King, and the fact that all there pictured in vision would eventually be fulfilled. He says, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we declared unto you the power and coming of Jesus, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty [his kingly glory] when we were with him in the holy mount." – 2 Pet. 1:16,18.

The central figure, therefore, of that vision was Jesus himself. Moses and Elias were merely accessories to fill out the picture. It

was the Son of man who was to be honored, whose kingly dominion was to be represented, so that the disciples, who were to be so severely tried in their faith respecting him very shortly, might have a firm conviction respecting the authenticity of his claims as Messiah – that they might be able to witness a good confession of him to others, and be prepared through faith to accomplish the work of God to which they had been chosen as apostles of the Lamb – that the three who were with the Lord were representatives of the twelve, in whom the latter would all have confidence.

"HE WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM"

The account is very explicit; his countenance was changed, his raiment became white and glistening, the heavenly glory fairly shining in his entire person. He was not changed actually. That change from human to divine, beginning at his baptism, when he received the anointing of the holy Spirit, the begetting of the holy Spirit to the divine nature, did indeed develop, change him from glory to glory, shining out in all the conduct of life; but his actual change did not occur until three days after Calvary, when he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. Then that which was sown in weakness was raised in power, that which was sown in dishonor of men was raised in glory, that which was sown in the fleshly body which knew no sin, but was holy, harmless, separate from sinners, was raised a spiritual body, filled with all the fulness of the divine nature.

What the disciples saw, therefore, was not this change from human to divine, but a vision of it – a picture of it. Somewhat similar was the vision granted to Saul of Tarsus [R3794 : page 183] on his way to Damascus, when smitten down by the light above the brightness of the sun at noonday. He declares that the Lord appeared to him at noonday, a light shining above the brightness of the sun. Something of this brightness, this light, this

transcendent grandeur was pictured before the three apostles in the holy mount, and no wonder that they fell upon their faces with fear – they were in trepidation in the presence of such glorious grandeur. Respecting the divine glory we read that Christ, "whom no man hath seen or can see," – since his resurrection – "dwelleth in a light which no man can approach unto."

Whenever even a vision is granted to mortals of this heavenly grandeur they must be specially protected of the Lord that the glorious brightness does not injure the mortal eye. In the case of Saul of Tarsus, we know that, lacking this protection, his sight was destroyed and he was blind for certain days, until by a miracle his sight was partially restored, though even then the defect remained a thorn in the flesh to his last moments – a reminder of how once he had been a persecutor of the just, an injurious person as respects the Lord's cause – reminding him also of the propriety of humility, and assisting in keeping him very humble, so that he describes himself as being one of the least of all saints.

Indeed we may safely conclude that those of the Lord's people who have seen with any kind of vision the glories of the Lord or have had a glimpse through the eyes of their understanding or otherwise of the glorious character and person of our Lord and God, have had the opportunity of realizing more than ever their own littleness and insufficiency. As it was the three most advanced ones of the Lord's followers who were granted that vision of the Kingdom, so since then it is the most advanced of the Lord's followers, the most humble, the most zealous, the most faithful, who are granted the clearest visions, the clearest perceptions of the glories of the Kingdom, and these are permitted to reveal to others of the elect little flock more and more of the grandeurs of the divine arrangement as each may be able to hear and to appreciate and to understand the same.

What wonderful privileges are ours at this day! Abiding in the Lord's love and favor, with loyalty of heart toward him, it is now our privilege of going up into the Mount of God and seeing wonderful things. Our visions are of a different kind. Before us are opened the glorious things of all the past – the divine revelations to Abraham and the prophets and through Jesus and the apostles – all of these things now are opened before us, radiant with harmonious beauty. Ours is a vision of Moses and the Lamb, and ours is a picture of Moses and the Lamb in the very highest and grandest sense.

"MOSES AND ELIAS APPEARED"

No intimation is given to us of why Moses and Elias were introduced into the vision. We must draw an inference. Since it was a vision, and as Christ was shown in the vision as a King, these two faithful ones of the **[R3794 : page 184]** past must be viewed in their relationship to Jesus and the Kingdom. These two, as will be remembered, like Jesus, had fasted each forty days: thus representatively they were one with the Lord in a remarkable devotion to the heavenly Father – in the practice of self-denial from a desire to be acceptable to the Lord and to fully acquaint themselves with the divine purposes.

Moses evidently represented the Mosaic dispensation. He stood as a representative of Israel after the flesh, and possibly as a representative also of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Enoch and all the faithful of the past, as we read, "Moses was faithful as a servant over all his house." Are they to have a place in the Kingdom? We answer, Yes. The divine promise is that when Messiah shall be glorified, the ancient worthies – *whom Moses evidently represented in this vision* – will be made princes in all the earth, agents or representatives of the heavenly Kingdom, its ministers of righteousness amongst men. (Psa. 45:16.) Nevertheless those ancient worthies, as we have previously seen, are separate and

distinct as a class from the Church. John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, than whom the Lord declares no prophet was greater, belonged to that fleshly house of faithful servants of God, who instead of being the fathers shall shortly be the children of Christ and serve the cause they love as the princes of Messiah. But they without us shall not be made perfect: God having reserved some better thing for us. – Heb. 11:40.

ELIJAH, THE CHURCH'S REPRESENTATIVE

Elijah in the vision evidently represented the Gospel Church. We have already pointed out that Elijah's work was an attempted reformation, such as the Church has been commissioned to attempt throughout this Gospel age. We have already pointed out (see MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. II., chap. 8) that Elijah typified the Gospel Church in all of his course; that the 1260 days of the drouth and famine while Elijah was in the wilderness prefigured the 1260 years of drouth and famine while the Church was in the wilderness during the "dark ages"; that the persecutor of Elijah was Jezebel, while the persecutor of the Church is symbolically called Jezebel. (Rev. 2:20.) We have seen that the emergence of Elijah from the wilderness and the measure of reformation that took place prefigured the Reformation movement of the sixteenth century and onward, and that his subsequent fleeing from Jezebel represented later persecutions, and that Elijah's eventual taking away in a whirlwind, in a chariot of fire, illustrates the ultimate gathering of the last members of the Gospel Church in connection with the time of trouble.

Now look at the vision, the picture, and note its significance – Jesus glorified, transfigured, radiant like the sun as in Revelation (1:14-16), and with him in the Kingdom glory and brightness, represented by Elijah, the Elijah class, the Gospel Church, the little flock, his joint-heirs in the Kingdom, and also associated with him the ancient worthies portrayed by Moses. A conversation

is represented as taking place respecting our Lord's crucifixion. And so it is that not only the ancient ones trusted in a sacrifice to come, but the Gospel Church trusts in the sacrifice already accomplished for her, and there is a full communion or fellowship between the two. Furthermore, when the Kingdom shall be established, assuredly all of the Lord's faithful ones will look to Calvary and its great sacrifice for sins as being the very center of the divine program or arrangement on which hangs all the blessings both for the Church and for the world through the Kingdom of God's dear Son.

"THIS IS MY BELOVED SON: HEAR HIM"

The essence of the entire vision was to impress upon the minds of the apostles the fact that Jesus was the Messiah, that he was worthy of being heard, that he was the mouthpiece of God, that he that honored him honored the Father also. This voice was heard from the cloud, which represented the darkness and trouble which would be permitted to come upon the Lord's followers in the midst of all the trials of the dark days that were coming upon them in connection with Jesus' rejection by the Jews, his scourging, dishonor, crucifixion, death, burial. In all this they were to remember the voice of the Father, "This is my beloved Son," and were not to be discouraged nor allow their faith to grow faint. Similarly throughout this Gospel age the Lord has frequently permitted the same dark cloud to come over his faithful ones, that they might be the better prepared also to listen to his Word, his message, "This is my beloved Son," and this vision of the Holy Mount is an assurance respecting the glorious Kingdom which he will establish, which will be the end of darkness and trouble.

As the apostles were overpowered by the brilliancy of the vision and feared when they entered the cloud and heard the voice, so we in our weak and imperfect conditions sometimes find it difficult to grasp the glorious things which God hath set before us.

The picture of the things unseen as yet is so wonderful as to amaze us. The fact that we have been invited to be heirs of God and associates with Jesus Christ our Lord in his Kingdom is too wonderful for us to grasp. We begin to fear lest we should fail in so great an undertaking. It is well for us to realize our own littleness and unworthiness, and to see that the whole matter is of the divine arrangement. It is well for us under the circumstances that the dark cloud of trouble and opposition is permitted to keep us very humble, that we may indeed fall on our faces in the dust. It is well that we should listen to the voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son: hear him." It is well that we should hear the Son assuring us that all things shall work together for good to those who love God. It is well that we should exercise faith in him that speaketh from heaven, lest we should become weary and faint in our minds. It is well that the Master teach us as he taught his disciples, and that looking up we should see Jesus only, that we should realize that in him alone is our help, that God hath laid help upon one who is mighty to deliver, and that so realizing that all of our help is in Christ Jesus we should hold fast to the relationship which we have already secured through faith in his blood and through consecration to him.

MAKING THREE TABERNACLES

The impulsive Peter cried out, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: let us now make three tabernacles – one for thee, one for Moses and one for Elias": not knowing what he said. How many there are who, Peter-like, want to be **[R3795 : page 185]** doing something, want to be rearing earthly tabernacles. How few at first catch the real spirit of the vision and realize that it represents things that are yet to be attained and not things of the present time of temporary tabernacles. All about us we see the disposition to rear costly temples of an earthly kind to the Lord, and a neglect of the vision in its real meaning, sentiment, teaching – that it points to the future, to the enduring perfect Temple condition, when

everything imperfect and temporal shall have passed away and the Kingdom of God's dear Son shall have been fully established. Let us remember that Jesus did not accept Peter's proposition for earthly temporary tabernacles, but directed the minds of his followers to the eternal things of the Kingdom, which are to be brought to pass in God's due time. May the Master's touch ever keep us more and more awake to the privileges of our position, to the glorious opportunities that are granted to us of participating with him in his Kingdom.
