

## Christ's glory revealed

Malachi 4:1-6 and Matthew 17:1-13

I have often found it interesting listening to people as they speak of the glory of God ... and how that glory was revealed in Christ ... because what we should not fail to forget is the reality that God's glory is eternal ... and it is made manifest in all of His attributes ... it is a beauty that emerges from His character ... from all that He is. And beloved ... we must not overlook the fact that God's glory has been revealed to us throughout the Scriptures... In the Old Testament we can read of multiple accounts in which God revealed His glory, just listen to the words of Isaiah the prophet, "Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, From the terror of the Lord And the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." And in Exodus when Moses made the request of God to show him His glory ... God responded, "you cannot see My face, for no one may see Me and live", and so God in His mercy hid Moses in a cleft in a rock to protect him from the fulness of His glory as it passed by. Beloved, no man or woman can view God excelling splendor without being utterly overwhelmed. Just think of how every time one of the prophets came into the presence of God they would fall flat on their face, laying prostrate on the floor, for their eyes could not look upon the absolute glory of God... And then we come to the New Testament ... where God's glory is revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. As it is written in the Gospel of John, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." In Jesus, the glory of God is humbly revealed to us ...

And this is exactly what we will see in Matthew chapter 17 versus 1 to 13, as we see Jesus being prepared to face the trial that was coming His way with courage... and He is reminded of the Father's constant love and of the glory that would follow His imminent suffering.

And beloved this morning we will be looking at versus 1 to 13 in two parts. First we will be looking at versus 1 to 8, Jesus' glory foreshadowed. Then we will be looking at versus 9 to 13, Jesus' glory foretold.

Matthew chapter 17 versus 1 to 8 says, "After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus."

**Jesus' glory foreshadowed.** Beloved, we have before us a scene that many a scholar has likened to the events recorded in Exodus, when Moses went up to the holy mountain, taking with him Aaron, Nadab and Abihu. It was then that Moses saw the glory of God ... and by his mere speaking with the Lord the skin on his face had become radiant ... a reflection of the glory of the One in whose presence he had been. And now as we look at the Gospel of Matthew we see that Jesus takes Peter, James, and John with Him up a high mountain ... and

why Jesus chose these three is still open to debate ... some scholars are of the opinion that Jesus chose these three because they were the three disciples most capable of understanding and sympathizing ... and others suggest that it is because they were the three disciples that were amongst the first Jesus had called. And then there are those who suggest that Jesus called these three because of their roles in Jesus' life ... Peter, being the one to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. John, is described as the one that Jesus loved ... affirming his spiritual affinity to the Messiah... and James ... who would be the first of the twelve disciples to lay down his life for the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ... Now beloved these examples are merely for our consideration ... the Scriptures do not tell us outright why these three were chosen ... however what we can be certain of is that they were there to bear witness to the events that had taken place ... they were there to testify to the church concerning the things they had seen and heard. And what they saw and what they heard was incredible, for some maybe inconceivable. For as the three disciples looked on ... before their very eyes Jesus was transfigured... His very appearance changed ... His face began to shine like the sun and his clothes became white and radiant with dazzling light ... Jesus' divine glory came bursting forth ... And before Him stood Moses and Elijah ... and their appearance is significant because of their representative roles in Israel's salvation history... Moses representing the law and Elijah representing the prophets. And in Jesus we see the fulfilment of Gods law and the final prophet... Just listen to the words of Hebrews chapter, "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven." And so as the three disciples witness this amazing interaction ... Peter as is the norm with him ... speaks before he does his thinking ... offering to build shelters for Jesus, Moses and Elijah ... perhaps wanting to prolong this experience and getting caught up in the moment ... either way his question does not receive an answer ... because while he is still speaking a bright cloud covers them ... an event that is often recorded in the Scriptures indicating the presence of God. And Peter's babbling is interrupted ... turning the focus back to Jesus and His identity as the Son of God. The words spoken from the cloud are identical to those spoken at Jesus' baptism, with one addition 'listen to Him'... signifying Jesus' role as the One who had been sent to teach the truths of God's call upon His people's lives... And one can only imagine how this would cause the disciples to tremble and be fearful ... just picture the scene of God manifesting Himself in bright cloud and then hearing His voice echo as He affirms His only begotten Sons call ... John Calvin, the great reforms says, "God intended that the disciples should be struck with this terror, in order to impress more fully on their hearts the memory of this vision." Yet ... out of His love for these three men, Jesus walks up to them and gently touches them ... saying to them stand up ... and do not be afraid ... comforting them by His presence ... and alleviating their fears as He stands there alone with them. Beloved ... can you imagine the scene ... it must have felt like a dream ... but it was not ... for these three men had just witnessed the foreshadowing of Jesus' true glory ... His oneness with the Father in heaven.

Matthew chapter 17 versus 9 to 13 says, "As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." The disciples asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?" Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist."

**Jesus' glory foretold.** As the three disciples and Jesus now make their way back down the mountain, He gives Peter, John and James the very strict instruction not to tell anyone ... not even the other nine disciples who had not made the trip with them ... and beloved it was not because this was some massive secret ... but rather it was because every danger of premature proclamation must be avoided ... when the proper time arrives ... that is after Jesus' resurrection ... then the disciples can... will... and must proclaim the testimony of what they had witnessed... because the resurrection of Jesus will shed the necessary light on the events that had taken place ... beloved ... we are very fortunate to have the whole Bible in our hands ... we know what will take place ... for the disciples ... there were still many things they were going to be witnesses of before they would be able to understand these events fully. And so with Jesus' instruction of silence an important question came to the disciples mind... presumably responding to the Jewish study of Malachi chapter 4 versus 5 to 6 which refers to Yahweh sending Elijah "before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes." And so given that Jesus had now been recognized by His disciples as the Messiah ... along with having now witnessed something of His future glory ... with Elijah in attendance ... it is not surprising that they are asking about the coming "day of the Lord" ... And the answer they receive would have surely taken them by surprise ... "Elijah has already come" ... The disciples give no indication of understanding that an Elijah figure had already come on the scene ... for it was a literal return of Elijah they were expecting ... but Jesus was referring to John the Baptist ... better known as John the presbyterian ... whose arrival had preceded Christ's ... and who in a worthy manner had been Jesus' forerunner ... paving the way for His ministry. Furthermore ... John the Baptist dressed like Elijah did ... Jesus speaks of John as the Elijah who was to come in Matthew chapter 11 verse 14 ... And now Jesus affirms that what the disciples were asking had in fact already happened. And the sad reality was that John ... at the hands of Herod had suffered and died ... just as He, that is Jesus, would suffer at the hands of the authorities when He came to Jerusalem. And so, when Jesus assured the three that "Elijah" had already come and been rejected and killed ... they understood that it was in fact John the Baptist ... because as I mentioned earlier this was not the first time that Jesus had made the connection between the two men. A rare moment for the disciples I must add ...

Beloved the events that took place on the mountain ... both at the top and on the way down ... give evidence to Jesus' glory being revealed to His disciples ... They witnessed in His transfiguration a glimpse of His glory that would soon be seen in His resurrection and taking His place at the Father's right hand ... and then there was the realization of the glory of the Messiah being revealed from the time of the prophets ... and beloved ... we are all witnesses of His glory today ... through our salvation that was made complete on the cross of Calvary ...because Christ's presence in us is the hope of glory... and this truth is full of "glorious riches."

Our once dead, darkened spirits are made alive by Him and through Him that conquered death. Christ is in our hearts... and we know that there is life beyond this earthly existence... a life that will be glorious beyond all imagination. For it will be in the presence of perfect Redeemer ... And it is all for His glory and His glory alone ... So beloved ... my challenge to you this morning ... is to seek to glorify Christ in all that you do ... for all that we do should be to glorify our perfect and glorious Saviour ... and rest in His glory because it will give you a sense of peace that far surpasses all understanding... as John Piper put it so beautifully ... God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.

Extol the Triune God's attributes... praise His works... trust His name... and obey His Word. Jesus is holy, faithful, merciful, gracious, loving, majestic, sovereign, and powerful. His works are wonderful, wise, marvelous, and fearfully complex. His Word is "perfect . . . trustworthy . . . right . . . radiant . . . pure . . . firm . . . precious". His salvation is astonishing, timely, and near. No matter how loudly or widely we proclaim the glory of God, He is always worthy of more!

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