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WHEN HEAVEN OPENED ON THE MOUNTAIN

SEEING THE RADIANT MAJESTY OF JESUS
AND HEARING THE FATHER'S
CALL TO LISTEN TO HIM.

A REFLECTION FROM MATTHEW 17:1-9

When Heaven Opened on the Mountain

Seeing the Radiant Majesty of Jesus and Hearing the Father's Call to Listen to Him.

There are moments in Scripture where heaven seems to draw especially near to earth. The Transfiguration of Jesus in Matthew 17:1-9 is one of those moments. On a quiet mountain, three disciples were given a glimpse of something that forever changed their understanding of who Jesus truly is.

This passage is a glorious revelation of Christ's identity, His authority, and His sufficiency for our salvation. Let us now mentally step onto that mountain and consider what God wants us to see.

A Glimpse of the True Glory of Christ

Matthew tells us that Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a high mountain, setting them apart for a moment they would never forget. As they stood there with Him in quiet solitude, something extraordinary unfolded before their eyes. Scripture says that Jesus "was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light" (Matthew 17:2). This was not a transformation in His nature, nor was it a temporary

exchange of His humanity for something else. It was a gracious unveiling. The glory that had always belonged to Him as the eternal Son of God was allowed to shine openly through His true human flesh.

Christ's physical body remained fully present and fully real. It did not fade, dissolve, or become less essential as His divine majesty radiated outward. The disciples were not witnessing a departure from His humanity, but rather its perfect union with His deity. Before their astonished eyes stood the God Man, the same Jesus who walked with them, taught them, and shared their daily life. In that radiant moment, they saw that His human nature and divine glory exist together in perfect harmony.

This scene also serves as a beautiful foreshadowing of the risen and ascended Christ. After His resurrection, Jesus would continue to exist in His glorified human body, still bearing the marks of the cross as everlasting testimony to His redeeming work, as seen in John 20:27 and Revelation 5:6. The Transfiguration gives us a preview of that eternal reality. It reminds us that the Lord who reigns in heaven today remains the same incarnate Savior, our merciful High Priest, who forever unites divine glory with true humanity in His own person.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Christ's divine glory was veiled beneath His humanity. On this mountain, the veil was briefly lifted. The disciples saw the radiant majesty of the eternal Son of God. John later reflected on this reality when he wrote, "We have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Beloved of the Lord, this preview of Christ's glorified humanity serves to remind the faithful of our own bodily resurrection unto glory! We shall be like Him! Hallelujah forevermore!

The shining of Jesus' face also reminds us of Moses in Exodus 34:29, whose face reflected God's glory after meeting with Him. Yet Jesus does not reflect glory. He radiates it. Hebrews 1:3 describes Him as "the radiance of the glory of God." This moment teaches us a foundational truth. Jesus is not merely a great teacher or moral example. He is God in the flesh, full of divine majesty, the Son of God.

The Law and the Prophets Point to Him

As the disciples watched in awe, two familiar figures appeared beside Jesus. Moses and Elijah stood there speaking with Him. Their presence carries deep meaning. Moses represents the Law. Elijah represents the Prophets. Together, they symbolize the entire Old Testament.

Their appearance confirms what Jesus later explained in Luke 24:27: all the Scriptures ultimately point to Him. Every promise, every prophecy, and every covenant finds its fulfillment in Christ.

Overwhelmed by the moment, Peter suggested building three tents. His instinct was reverent, yet it revealed a misunderstanding. He placed Moses and Elijah alongside Jesus rather than recognizing Christ's supreme position.

God the Father immediately clarified this.

A bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice declared, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him" (Matthew 17:5).

These words echo the Father's affirmation at Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:17. They also fulfill the promise of Deuteronomy 18:15, where Moses foretold a coming prophet whom the people must hear. The Father directs all attention to Christ alone. He is the final and ultimate revelation of God.

Jesus Alone Is Enough

When the disciples heard the Father's voice, they fell face down in fear. Encounters with divine holiness often produce this response. Isaiah experienced it when he saw the Lord and cried out, "Woe is me" (Isaiah 6:5). Yet what happens next reveals the tender heart of Christ. Jesus came to them, touched them, and said, "Rise, and have no fear" (Matthew 17:7).

Here we see both His majesty and His mercy. The One who shines with divine glory also draws near to comfort trembling sinners. Hebrews 4:16 reminds us that we may approach Him with confidence because He is our compassionate High Priest. Then comes one of the most beautiful statements in the passage: "They saw no one but Jesus only" (Matthew 17:8).

This is the central message of the Transfiguration. Christ alone is our Savior. The Law points to Him. The Prophets proclaim Him. Salvation rests fully in Him. As Colossians 1:18 declares, He is preeminent in all things.

Glory Through the Cross

As they came down the mountain, Jesus instructed the disciples to keep silent until after His resurrection. The fullness of His glory would only be understood after His suffering and victory over death. This reminds us that the path to glory leads through the cross. Philippians 2:8 to 9 tells us that Christ humbled Himself to the point of death, and afterward God exalted Him above every name. The shining Christ on the mountain is the same Savior who went to Calvary for sinners. His glory and His sacrifice belong together.

Seeing Christ by Faith Today

We do not stand on that mountain as Peter, James, and John did. Yet through Scripture, the Holy Spirit grants us something just as real. We are given eyes of faith to behold the glory of

Christ. One sweet day, His glory will fill all His creation as He returns physically to make all things new. Revelation 21:23 tells us that in New Jerusalem, the Lamb Himself will be the light.

Until that day, we live with this simple and powerful focus: Jesus only. He is our righteousness. He is our mediator. He is our hope. And He is fully sufficient for every need of our souls. May we listen to Him, trust in Him, and rejoice in the glory of the beloved Son of God.

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