

Matthew 17:5-9. the Voice of God on the Mount.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

God spoke to the three apostles on Mount Tabor in a gentle and loving manner, revealing his glory and delight in his beloved Son.

Scripture: Matthew 17:1

Topics: "Divine Glory", "Faith Sustained"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer reflects on the contrasting ways God spoke to Israel at Mount Sinai and the three favored apostles at Mount Tabor, emphasizing God's delight in His Son and the inability of sinful man to bear the full manifestation of God's glory. The apostles, overwhelmed by the heavenly vision, were instructed by Jesus to keep silent about it until after His resurrection, as they were appointed to endure unique trials and needed the memory of His glory to sustain their faith through suffering.

Transcript

In the Old Testament, we read of God speaking to Israel from the top of Mount Sinai. On that occasion there was blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; so terrible was the sight, that even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake;" and so terrible was the sound, that Israel entreated that they might hear the voice of God no more. (Deut. 5:25.)

In how different a manner God spoke to the three favored apostles on the summit of Mount Tabor! And what was the reason of this difference?

The words that the Father spoke tell us why he laid aside his terrors, and arrayed himself in the mildest beams of celestial glory. He was well pleased in his beloved Son. His wrath against a guilty world was displayed upon Mount Sinai; his delight in his righteous Son was manifested upon Mount Tabor. Neither was his favor shown to his Son alone, but to those three trembling apostles who loved that Son; for they also entered into the bright cloud. Why then were they so sore afraid? Why did they fall on their faces? Because, since man became a sinner, he has never been able to bear the manifestation of the glory of Jehovah. The smoke and the torments of hell are not the only sights that would overwhelm a mortal man; the brightness and the joys of heaven would be more than he could bear to behold. Now Peter perceived how unwisely he had spoken when he had requested always to abide on that mountain top. But God, who knew the weakness of his dying creatures, did not prolong the glorious scene. In a little while the apostles

were left alone with Jesus. Though they felt his familiar hand, and heard his well-known voice, yet at first they could hardly believe that the heavenly vision was past. Mark records that they "looked round about, and saw no man any more, save Jesus, with themselves."

Who can conceive the feelings with which those three apostles descended the mount! They had seen heaven come down to earth; how could they return to earth again! They had beheld glorified saints; they had heard the voice of the eternal Father; they had witnessed the glories of their beloved, yet despised Master. Who can doubt that their hearts were burning with the desire to describe the wonderful scene to their brethren at the foot of the mount, and perhaps even to declare it to the proud enemies that continually assailed them with taunts and reproaches. But Jesus imposed silence upon them. He said, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead." He knew that at this time they would have been disbelieved, if they had related what they had seen. It was enough for these blessed disciples that they themselves had enjoyed a glimpse of celestial glory. The recollection would help to sustain their faith when they should behold their Lord agonizing and bleeding in the garden; for it is remarkable that Jesus chose the same men to be witnesses of his glory and of his agony.

And why did he distinguish these three above their brethren? Was it not because they were appointed to endure peculiar trials? The Lord foretold that James and John would drink of his cup of bitterness, and be baptized with his baptism of suffering; and he prepared Peter for the painful and ignominious death of the cross. Jesus knows beforehand what sufferings each of his servants will be called to endure, and he knows who most needs bright displays of his present glory, and near views of his past agonies. In acute suffering of any kind, the thoughts that most sustain the mind are the remembrance of Christ crucified, and the anticipation of beholding Christ glorified. How many have said, when in great pain, "What are my sufferings compared to the sufferings of Jesus for my sins!" How many when pressed down with sorrow have felt, "How soon will the sight of my glorious Redeemer make my present grief appear light as air!"

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