

The 19th century English priest, John Mason Neale, writes of the comparisons between a dazzling sunset and the Transfiguration. He writes, *when we look at those long lines of gold that lay so quietly in the west, and at the intense brightness beneath them, where the sun has gone down, we may remember Him Who was as at this time transfigured before His disciples; when His Face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And we may look on to that day when, if by GOD'S grace we are counted worthy to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, our own bodies will be as His Body was, glorious beyond the power of our hearts now to imagine.*

It is interesting to think that if creation is a sign of the creator, then to see a beautiful sunset should remind us of the glory of the Transfiguration. We hear in the Gospel that while Jesus prays, His countenance is altered, and his raiment, or clothing, are white and glistening. The other Gospels record that his face shone as brightly as the sun, and his clothes were as bright as lightning. Then we consider that according to tradition, this great event happened in the dead of night, fulfilling that which was written by Isaiah, *Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of Hosts shall reign in Mount Sion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously.* (Is.24:23) No wonder Jesus took with him only Peter, James, and John. For here we see the Messiah as the Israelites expected Him to appear, in all his overwhelming power and glory. Who can blame St. Peter for wanting to build three shrines to mark the occasion? Afterall, he, a Galilean fisherman is awestruck over not just witnessing the true glory and splendor of Jesus Christ, but he has seen for himself not just Moses the bringer of the Law but the great prophet Elijah too.

And just as the Transfiguration was full of the Glory of Jesus Christ, so is it full of symbolism and meaning. The great prophets Moses and Elijah are seen on either side of Jesus. Moses represents the Law. When he had received the Law on Mount Sinai his face shown so bright that he veiled his face lest he intimidate the Israelites. Moses would die on another mountain side overlooking the promised land because of his disobedience. He who had been buried by GOD, no man knowing his resting-place, appears now in glory beside Jesus. It is at the Transfiguration that Moses sees not just the Promised Land but sees and talks with the Promised One.

Standing to the other side of Jesus is the great prophet, Elijah. Every year during the Passover meal the Jews opened the doors to their homes for the prophet's return to herald the coming of the Messiah. The many miracles that Elijah

worked pointed to so many of the miracles that Jesus would do during His earthly ministry. Elijah had his mountain top experiences too; on the top of Mount Carmel, he had called down fire from heaven to prove to all Israel Who the One True God is. Soon after this victory he fled to Mount Sinai and sat on a cliff through earthquake, wind, and fire, to listen to the still small voice of God. Elijah who was taken up by a chariot of fire, and a whirlwind, returns to earth during the Transfiguration.

The giver of the Law, and the greatest of Prophets, came to bear witness to Jesus who is Maker of the Law, and inspirer of the Prophets. And what did they talk of? With Jesus radiating light, shining in the dead of night as brightly as the sun, and with Moses and Elijah, great men of God, on either side, we would think that they would talk of that kingdom which the LORD had come on earth to establish. The kingdom of heaven which shall never be destroyed, against which the gates of Hell shall not prevail; that kingdom which shall be from sea to sea, and from the flood unto the world's end. Nothing less. Yet, *they appeared in glory, and spake of His decease*. To talk of death in the height of this glory! To talk of a shameful death, a death of agony, amidst such brightness as the world had never before seen! It must have been like a dark storm cloud passing in front of a glorious sunset.

*They spake of the death which He should accomplish.* We do not typically associate the word accomplish with something negative like death. Normally, the verb accomplish is used in conjunction with something we would consider positive, like the accomplishment of a goal, or the completion of a task. There is a certain sense of fulfillment to the word accomplishment. This word used to describe the death of the Lord, during such a glorious event tells us exactly what Jesus's death on a very different mountain side will be like. The death of the Son of God is the most cruel and torturous death in history, and yet it is the most glorious death because of what it accomplishes, the salvation of the world. This was a brighter and better vision than Moses had, when he stood at the top of Mount Pisgah, and beheld all the land which GOD had promised to His people. This was a nobler prospect than Elijah had, when the chariot was taking him up above the clouds, and his mantle fell from off him.

The Transfiguration shows us the revelation of the Son of God who is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. It also reveals to us something of the nature of the glory of God made man which cannot be separated from the sacrificial death of Jesus. And we, if we now desire to see His glory, must do as the Disciples did. They went up into a high mountain apart. We must try and get above this world, apart by ourselves, at a distance from the troubles and cares of the earth

and fix our hearts on that land where He now is. We must do this so that we can better hear His voice and understand Him. God is well pleased with none in Christ but those that hear him. But we must hear him and believe him, as the great Prophet and Teacher; hear him, and be ruled by him, as the great Prince and Lawgiver; hear him, and heed him. Whoever would know the mind of God, must listen to Jesus Christ; for by him God has in these last days spoken to us. As St. Paul writes: *But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the LORD, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the SPIRIT of the LORD:* that so, as He was transfigured, while He dwelt here, in heavenly glory, we, while we are yet here below, may be transfigured to His image!

And now to GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory for ever. Amen.