

The Coming Glory of the Millennial Kingdom

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“And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white”
(Luke 9:29).

At his transfiguration, we see Jesus Christ in splendor. It is a glimpse of his glory as the only Son of God. In his providence, God gave us this glorious glimpse to strengthen us now in our life of faith in a world so filled with darkness. In the Bible, there are many glimpses like this of the glorious future that awaits us. In fact, we await a glorious kingdom of righteousness and peace over all the earth. The Jews had this hope, for this is how their prophets spoke. They prophesied a kingdom of splendor that would come, a kingdom of righteousness that would fill the world and remain forever. Daniel, for example, spoke of a stone that was cut not by hands that would destroy all the kingdoms of the earth, become a great mountain, fill the whole world, and remain forever (Dan. 2:34-35, 44). This stone, he said, is the kingdom of God. “And in the days of those kings,” Daniel prophesied, “the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever” (Dan. 2:44). When this happens, all existing secular kingdoms will come to an end and the kingdom of God will fill the earth and last forever. This prophecy has yet to be fulfilled in an openly manifest way.

The Jews hoped for the Messiah, the son of David, who would be great, be born of a virgin, and be called God-with-us, Emmanuel (Isa. 7:14). He will also be called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). His kingdom will be a universal kingdom of peace on earth (Isa. 9:7); and when he comes, “he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth” (Zech. 9:10).

This is a vision of glory to be realized in the future. This is what the Jews expected, and it was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He brought this peaceful kingdom to the earth in a hidden way that will later be gloriously manifested in all its splendor at his second coming when he returns with the clouds of heaven, accompanied by all his holy ones (Zech 14:5; Rev. 19:14; 1 Thess. 3:13). We are now awaiting this manifestation of his glory.

God’s promise to Abraham was the beginning of the revelation of this glory. God promised him much land. “To your descendants I give this land,” said the Lord to him, “from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen. 15:18). His descendants will inherit it and possess it forever. “All the land which you see,” said the Lord to Abraham, “I will give to you and to your descendants for ever” (Gen. 13:15). “And I will give to you, and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession” (Gen. 17:8). This promise was

partially fulfilled for a while under David and Solomon, but we still look for its complete and lasting fulfillment in the future.

All these glorious prophecies of a kingdom of righteousness on earth were fulfilled in Jesus Christ in a hidden way. He was like the tiny mustard seed that will one day become a great bush. So we are awaiting his Parousia to see the kingdom that he brought to earth come in manifest glory. It is good and important for us that the prophets gave us these glimpses of glory. We now live from this vision of future glory that will one day be ours. The transfiguration is another glimpse of the future glory of Jesus Christ when he will return in his risen and glorified body to illuminate the earth. Then every eye shall see him (Rev. 1:7), “for as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of man be in his day” (Luke 17:24). Then he will come to establish his kingdom of righteousness on earth, and we will be transformed (1 Cor. 15:51). “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43), and the Sun of righteous shall reign (Mal. 4:2).

According to the Apocalypse, this reign of righteousness on earth will last for a thousand years, during which time Satan will be bound (Rev. 20:4-7). Then at the end of the millennium, the present world will be destroyed, the new heavens and the new earth will be established (Rev. 21:1), the new and heavenly Jerusalem will descend (Rev. 21:2) upon the new earth, and the eternal state will begin.

This is our hope. St. Paul says that God has not rejected his people (Rom. 11:1), and that in the future “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26)—not every individual, but Israel as a nation—“for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29). So we hope for the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham that his descendants will possess the whole land of Canaan forever, “from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen. 15:18). The Scriptures give us a glimpse now of this future glory, which will be fulfilled on the millennial earth. We also glimpse in the transfiguration the glory that Christ will have in those days, reigning over his kingdom of righteousness on earth—his whole person will shine, as it shone on the mount of Transfiguration.

So we are to prepare ourselves now for this glory, for we do not know the hour of his coming. We therefore avoid the worldly style of many, whose “god is their belly” (Phil. 3:19), for “our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (Phil. 3:20-21 NKJV).