

## POWER OF PRAISE

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### “Knowing the Heart of Jesus”

After following Jesus and living with Him for three years, His disciples still did not understand the heart of mercy that Jesus had for people, or His mission to rescue lost humanity through His death on the cross. Jesus took Peter, John and James up on a mountain to pray. While in prayer, Jesus was transfigured—His face altered and His robe shone white and glistening. Suddenly, Elijah and Moses appeared with Jesus and spoke to Him of His “decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:30). When the disciples saw Jesus standing there in His glory talking to Elijah and Moses, Peter declared, “Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” “While he (Peter) was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’ And when the voice ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen” (Luke 9: 33-36).

Peter, in His limited understanding of Who Jesus was and His mission, wanted to do the “religious” thing and build man-made monuments for a shrine where he witnessed Jesus’ transfiguration, as well as two long-departed prophets, Moses and Elijah. God the Father was not pleased with this response and gave the disciples a stern rebuke from heaven: “Hear Him!” That must have shaken them to the core!

How like man to try and “help” God by constructing religious icons that can be touched, and in which a man can boast about the work of his hands. The Lord declared, “Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that You will build for Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all these things My hand has made, and all those things exist, but on this one I will look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My

word” (Isaiah 66:1-3). Obviously, humble obedience to the words of Jesus is what God desired, not the self-effort of man-made religion.

After the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain, Jesus admonished His disciples for their lack of faith because they could not cast out a demon from a child (Luke 9:40-41). The disciples could not understand Jesus’ words when He told them about His upcoming death at the hands of men, and they were afraid to question Him about His saying (vs. 43-45). Next, the disciples broke out into an argument about who among them would be the greatest. Jesus then used a small child as an object lesson in humility (vs. 46-68). Afterward, John told Jesus that they saw someone casting out demons in His name, and forbade that person because He did not follow with them. Jesus corrected him by saying, “Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is for us” (vs. 49-50). It makes one wonder if there were not some jealousy because of the disciples’ previously failed attempt to cast out a demon. When Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem to fulfill His mission on the cross, a village of Samaritans refused to receive Him. James and John were incensed at this rejection of Jesus and said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?” But Jesus turned and rebuked them: *“You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them”* (vs. 51-56).

Since the time that the disciples heard the voice of God thundering from the cloud to obey His Son, they were rebuked by Jesus for their unbelief, selfish ambition, jealousy, and vengeance. They did not understand that the Master came to serve, not to be served, and to give His life as a ransom for many. Even after witnessing many miracles and hearing the gracious words of wisdom that Jesus spoke, they did not grasp the heart of the Lord, which is mercy. Ironically, the same disciples that wanted to “call down fire from heaven” to destroy those who rejected Him were in the same need of mercy after denying Jesus and fleeing, abandoning Him upon His arrest.

Much of what is called religion is man's attempt to build his own kingdom and invent a "god in his own image." It is full of pride, ambition, judgment, and arrogance. Jesus and His words express the exact image of the Father, full of grace and truth. Jesus blasted hypocritical, proud, religious posers; however, the scriptures say that the "common man heard Him gladly." Only Jesus has the words of Life, and the ability to save our souls. As God instructed His followers of old, He bids us: "Hear Him!"

*"For the Son of Man did not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." --Jesus (John 3:17).*