

The Transfiguration. Nassau. 5 April 2015.

Our Bible readings for this morning are all taken from the first gospel, the Gospel according to Matthew. And we begin in chapter 17, verse 1¹ ...

And after six days Jesus took with Him Peter, James, and John his brother, and brought them up into a high mountain by themselves.

And He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.

And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you will, let us make here three tabernacles: one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah'.

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and, behold, a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ('in whom I have found my delight'). Hear Him!'

And when the disciples heard it, they fell upon their faces and were greatly afraid.

But Jesus came and touched them and said, 'Arise, and be not afraid'.

And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

Now, chapter 26, breaking in at verse 65² ...

Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, 'He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?'

And they answering said, 'He is worthy of death'.

Then they spat in His face and buffeted Him; and some struck Him with the palms of their hands.

And finally, a few verses from the following chapter – from Matthew chapter 27 – commencing at verse 35 ...

Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: 'They divided my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots'.

Down to verse 38 ...

Then there were crucified with him two robbers, one on the right hand and one on the left.

And then to verse 45³ ...

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

I want us to think this morning about four simple and familiar elements in Matthew's account of the Transfiguration⁴ – namely our Lord's countenance, His clothing, His companions and the cloud.

First, His countenance. Luke tells us only that the 'fashion/appearance of His countenance/face was altered'.⁵ As we read, Matthew is more specific - 'His face shone as the sun'. The reference to the sun *may* suggest something of a contrast with Moses, who – in Exodus 34 – came down from Sinai with the skin of his face shining. It is clear that the glory of Moses' face was a reflected glory – that which did not originate in himself but in God.⁶ If anything, the radiance of his face was more like that of the moon, which only reflects the light of the sun. But here Jesus Himself was 'transfigured', and the word 'transfigured', used here doesn't refer to that which is merely external or which comes from outside – it indicates a change in His whole being. 'His face ('His countenance') shone as the *sun*'.

Second. His clothing. Although we know what His cousin John the Baptist wore, for, we are told, 'John ... was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist',⁷ and although we know something of what the religious

leaders wore, for example, with enlarged fringes or tassels to their garments,⁸ we know very little about what the Saviour wore.

But all three gospels tell us that His garments became white. Matthew is the briefest, telling us simply they 'became as white as the light'.

Mark tells us that 'His raiment became shining (gleaming), exceedingly white as snow, such as no fuller (launderer) on earth could whiten them'.⁹ The expression suggests the glistening, sparkling brightness of sun on snow. And Mark's expression may well reflect (sorry!) Peter's recollection of the moment, for it is likely that the site of our Lord's transfiguration was Mount Hermon, at the base of which lay Caesarea Philippi, from which He and His disciples had come just a few days before.¹⁰ Even today Mount Hermon is called the "snow mountain" and boasts a ski-resort.¹¹

Luke tells us that 'His raiment was white and glistening/gleaming',¹² – 'glistening' being the word used to describe blinding flashes of lightning – intensely brilliant – a stronger form of the word in 17.24, 'just as *the lightning* which *lightens (flashes out)* from one part under heaven, shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of man will be in His day'.¹³ In summary, His clothes became as bright as the light, as sparkling as the snow, and as dazzling as the lightning.

Third, His companions. Moses and Elijah. Interestingly, there were occasions when each of the three went without food for forty days and forty nights.¹⁴ But more interesting is the fact that it was Moses and Elijah, and not as we might have expected, given the two names from the Old Testament which open this gospel, Abraham and David.¹⁵

No doubt, there are several ways in which these two great men can be viewed, but in every one of these the Lord is greater than either Moses or Elijah.

We remember that Moses and Elijah both controlled the mighty waters. At the Red Sea, Moses needed a rod, a staff,¹⁶ and, at the Jordan, Elijah a robe, a mantle.¹⁷ Our Lord also controlled the water: but, on the Sea of Galilee, He needed neither rod nor robe, His powerful word was sufficient.¹⁸

Moses and Elijah were able only to direct and influence the external behaviour of the people. They were unable to change men's hearts. Consequently, the most outspoken of the people's promises, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do',¹⁹ and of the people's confessions, 'The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God',²⁰ came to nothing. But Jesus inaugurated a new covenant in His blood; 'This cup that is poured out for you is *the new covenant* in my blood'.²¹ One of its terms is that His law is written in our hearts; 'the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us', the writer to the Hebrews states, 'saying, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds"',²² the quotation coming from the Old Testament book of Jeremiah.²³

In the face of the many problems confronting him, at one stage Moses was all set to give in. Concerning his task, he said, "It is too heavy".²⁴ On one occasion, Elijah likewise found the way too hard, and cried, "It is enough".²⁵ The Lord Jesus faced waves of opposition altogether unknown to either prophet, and yet He continued until He could say, not "It is too heavy" or "It is enough", but "It is finished".²⁶

Yes, there are several ways in which Moses and Elijah can be viewed, but I think we are on safe ground when we say that, one way or the other, they appeared on the Mount as representatives of the former revelation given by God in the Old Testament. In this connection, I note that these were the two men whose names close the Old Testament - 'Remember the *law of Moses*, my servant ... Behold, I will send you *Elijah the prophet* before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord'.²⁷ Note those links – Moses and 'law'; Elijah and 'prophet'.

And I have in mind our Lord's words spoken a little later, 'The law and the prophets were until John' – John the Baptist, that is.²⁸ And the time had now come for the representatives of both the law and the prophets to step down – to depart and to disappear. For the revelation of God which the law and the prophets had brought, though inspired and true, had been at best piecemeal and incomplete.

But, as the writer to the Hebrews stresses in the well-known opening words of his epistle, God was now speaking in the Person of His Son – who brought God's full-orbed revelation and final word to men, and who thereby towers over and eclipses Moses, Elijah and all Old Testament prophets completely.²⁹

As with all the Old Testament prophets, their only credential – their only authority to speak and to preach – lay in their introductory formula 'Thus says the Lord' – which exact formula you will find no less than 416 times in your Old Testament.³⁰

But, by way of contrast, the Lord Jesus had a unique introductory formula of His own, 'I say to you' – words found on His lips over 50 times in this gospel alone;³¹ for example, we read His words in the so-called Sermon on the Mount, 'You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth". But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil'.³²

For whereas Moses and Elijah spoke as those *who had been commissioned by God*, He spoke as one *who was God*. Small wonder then that the Father declared, 'Hear Him'!

The names of both Moses and Elijah had been largely associated with mountains (Sinai and Carmel respectively), but on this mountain, they must retire, leaving us – as the three favoured disciples – to see 'no one but Jesus only'

Luke tells us that Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus about His 'decease' (His departure, exit, *exodus* - literally) which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Moses does not wish to discuss his exodus from Egypt, nor Elijah his exodus from earth. Are you listening, Peter? They have come to speak – and to speak only – *of that cross* which a week ago you had found so offensive and unacceptable – and *of that Jerusalem* from which, because you were told it held only suffering and death for Him, you then sought to deflect Him.

And then, fourthly, there was the cloud. 'While he was still speaking', we read, God responded instantly to Peter's thoughtless suggestion of erecting three tabernacle shelters to prolong the experience.³³ Moses and Elijah may speak in terms of an 'exodus' to be accomplished at Jerusalem – but Peter has no interest in the Feast of Passover – he has *his* eye on the Feast of Tabernacles!

Mark tells us that, at the time, Peter didn't know what to say. I recently came across a quote which made me smile, 'When the screen of your mind goes blank, don't forget to turn off the sound'. Peter forgot! Peter 'did not know what to say', but this didn't stop him blurting out to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tabernacles (booths), one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah'.³⁴

But it was not only that Peter was lost for words. Luke observes that he didn't know what he was saying when he was saying it.³⁵ But Peter was not the kind of man to let a little thing like that stop him!³⁶

But the Father certainly wasn't going to let Peter's unthinking suggestion³⁷ pass – which suggestion had the effect of ranking His Son with mere mortal men – *no - not for a moment!* It seems that the bright cloud initially overshadowed them and then fully enveloped them – the word translated 'overshadowed', being the same used in the Greek Old Testament of Exodus 40 verse 34, 'Then the cloud overshadowed the tabernacle of witness, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle'. This was the unmistakable manifestation and display of the presence of God.

And to cap it all, God spoke 'out of the cloud' - repeating substantially what He had declared at Jesus' baptism, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ('in whom I have found my delight')',³⁸ thereby confirming Jesus' identity both as His Son (as it is written in Psalm 2, 'Thou art my Son'³⁹) and as His Suffering Servant (as it is written in Isaiah 42, 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights').⁴⁰

And the same divine approval which had been proclaimed by the Father at the beginning of our Lord's public ministry, is now voiced again by the Father towards its close. At the Jordan, the Father had distinguished Him from the worst of men, come to be baptised 'to repentance', 'confessing their sins'.⁴¹ Whereas, on the mount, He distinguished Him from the best of men.

But now, to allusions to the psalms (Psa. 2) and the prophets (Isa. 42), He adds a reference to the law – to Deut. 18 – where God had said of the Prophet who He would raise up 'like' Moses – 'Him shall you hear'.⁴² So we hear the voice out of the cloud declare with reference to the Lord Jesus, 'hear Him'.

Moses and Elijah must now stand down – and so, when the disciples lifted their eyes 'they saw no-one but Jesus only'.⁴³ Moses and Elijah had returned whence they had come. Clearly Peter took the point, for, when he refers back to this incident some 30 years later, he makes no mention of either Moses or Elijah – referring only to the majesty (the magnificence) and the honour and glory of the Lord Jesus; 'we were eyewitnesses', he wrote, 'of His majesty ... when He received honour and glory from God the Father'.⁴⁴

Luke tells us that the disciples had 'feared as they entered into the cloud'.⁴⁵ And well they might. It is clear from Luke's account that the event took place at night – he tells us that Jesus 'took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as He prayed ...'⁴⁶ – and we know from elsewhere in Luke's gospel that it was the Lord's practice to spend much time at night in prayer. For example, 'in those days He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God'.⁴⁷ This explains why, as Luke noted, 'Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep',⁴⁸ – and why, as again noted by Luke, 'they came down from the mountain ... the next day'.⁴⁹ Yes – given that our Lord's transfiguration took place at night, small wonder they feared ... but the bright cloud held no terror or alarm for *Him* – it was a visible symbol of His Father's presence.

Truly Heaven bent low that night – hence Peter later wrote of the voice which ‘came (was borne) out of heaven’.⁵⁰ And so, for the second time, the Lord Jesus turned His back on the glory – leaving Moses and Elijah to return to heaven alone.⁵¹

But His time would come – and, if I understand it correctly, the cloud would return for Him – for we read in Acts 1, ‘when He had spoken these things, a cloud received Him (took Him up) out of their sight’.⁵² But first He must go to Jerusalem, to His cross – to His death – to His exodus.⁵³

But before even that, He must come down from the Mount to meet the acute need of a man and his only son, a young boy who was not only possessed by an unclean spirit, but by a particularly nasty, strong and malicious spirit – as witness the Lord’s statement that ‘this kind does not come out except by ...’, which singled out this spirit as exceptional – this was no ordinary, run-of-the-mill demon, but one who had successfully withstood the combined attempts of nine (doubtless embarrassed) apostles to expel it. And, on account of the presence of the unclean spirit, the man’s son was not only epileptic but both deaf and dumb – ‘Deaf and dumb spirit’, Jesus said, ‘I command you, come out of him’ – he was unable therefore either to hear his parents’ words of loving comfort or to make known anything of his own anguish, fears or distress.

But yes, love brought our Lord down from the Mount – from the place of glory and splendour – to the place of distress and misery ... from the place where heaven visited earth for a night to the place where the powers of darkness reigned – and where He issued His all-powerful edict, ‘Dumb and deaf spirit ... come out of him and never enter him again’, following which, the demon immediately came out!

And Peter needed to learn that it is equally ‘good to be here’ at the foot of the mount – among the desperate needs of men – as it is to be on the heights⁵⁴ of the mount. And I find it interesting that Luke uses the very same word to describe what astonished the men at the foot of the mountain as Peter uses to describe what had astonished James, John and himself at the top! – ‘they were all amazed’, Luke says, ‘at the mighty power (‘the majestic greatness’, ‘the majesty’) of God’.⁵⁵ ‘we’, Peter says, ‘were eyewitnesses of His majesty (‘His magnificence’, ‘His majestic greatness’).⁵⁶ And the Lord’s true majesty was as evident in His humble service for the needy as it was in the honour and glory which He received from God the Father on the holy mount.⁵⁷

But, as I said, a short time later, but before ever a cloud took Him up out of the sight of His disciples, He must go to Jerusalem, to His cross – to His death – to His exodus.

And, as we read, what stark contrasts Matthew paints for us then :

His countenance which here shone as the sun would then be disfigured – first, when members of the Jewish Sanhedrin ‘began to spit upon Him, and cover up His face, and buffet Him (to strike Him with clenched fists), and say to Him, ‘Prophesy’; and the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands’.⁵⁸

And then when the soldiers of the governor struck Him on the head ‘again and again’ – as the tense of the verb is⁵⁹ – with the sturdy reed/staff which they had put in His hand to play the part of a mock royal sceptre, the symbol of kingly authority.⁶⁰

As Isaiah foretold, ‘His visage (appearance, countenance) was marred (Hebrew = *disfigured*) more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men’⁶¹ – experiencing such disfigurement that He appeared barely human. Just think of it – the One now *transfigured* would then be *disfigured*!

His clothing – which was here radiant with His inner glory, would then be stripped from Him to provide the spoil for His execution squad. As we read, ‘they ... divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: “They divided my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots’.⁶²

As far as we know, our Lord’s garments represented the sum total of His earthly goods. Apart from these, all He could properly call His own was His ‘cross’. ‘He, bearing His cross’, John had written a few verses before speaking of our Lord’s garments, ‘went out to a place called the Place of a Skull’.⁶³

We know from His teaching that our Lord felt no great concern about what He wore. ‘Why are you anxious about clothing?’, He asked, ‘Consider the lilies of the field ... they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these’.⁶⁴ And yet His garments were not the grubby rags of a beggar. Clearly, from what we have read, the soldiers deemed His clothing to be worthwhile spoil.

It seems likely that, by custom, the garments of an executed man were forfeit, automatically becoming the property of the soldiers on duty, and that, for this reason, it was these men—and not ‘His mother’, who, we read, ‘stood by the cross’⁶⁵—who effectively ‘inherited’ our Lord’s clothing.

In his account, and we remember that, of the apostles, he alone was present, John tells us, 'Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to each soldier a part'.⁶⁶ We read in Acts 12 that, having had the apostle Peter arrested, Herod Agrippa 'put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him'⁶⁷ – a quaternion being a group of four soldiers. It is hardly surprising therefore that, together with their centurion, it was four soldiers who were made responsible for our Lord's crucifixion.⁶⁸

And it is these four men who, according to John 19, 'took His garments'⁶⁹ – who removed from Him the very garments which, according to John 13, He (the Lord Jesus) earlier had willingly 'laid aside', that He might perform the menial (slave-like) task of washing His disciples' feet.⁷⁰

Scholars are generally satisfied that, leaving aside the seamless inner tunic, the four pieces which, according to Mark's gospel, the soldiers distributed and apportioned among themselves by casting lots,⁷¹ consisted of (i) His sandals, (ii) His outer cloak-like garment, (iii) His head-gear, and (iv) His girdle, which would each be similar in value.⁷²

And it was the same four men who then proceeded, by again casting lots, to decide which of them would secure for himself the star prize, worth by far the most ... our Lord's seamless inner tunic⁷³

And what breath-taking associations each of these garments had!

Not least, of course, in that in all likelihood these were the very same garments which had, less than a year before, shone ablaze with glory on the Mount of Transfiguration

Yet now they became the property of four unnamed soldiers.

Just imagine — one of these soldiers left the scene carrying a pair of sandals, which the greatest of Israel's prophets (John the Baptist) had once confessed himself unworthy to carry, and the thong of which he had confessed himself unworthy to unloose.⁷⁴

I wonder how many miles those sandals had covered ... as, at least three times each year, the Saviour had walked the 65 miles from Galilee to Jerusalem and back ... as He made His way, among numberless other places, to Sychar's well, to Gadara's tombs and to Bethesda's porches.

What I know, is that, although my Lord had been wearing those sandals when Mary of Bethany fell 'at His feet' on the way to *Lazarus's* tomb in John 11,⁷⁵ He was most certainly not wearing them when the women 'who had followed Jesus from Galilee ... took hold of His feet' on the way from His (our Lord's) own tomb in Matthew 28!⁷⁶ And this, not only because the Risen Lord had no need for them, but because, barely two days before, a Roman soldier had carried them away from the Place of a Skull!

But if one of the soldier's walked away with a pair of sandals, the second soldier took with him a cloak-like garment, the border or fringe of which⁷⁷ had, according to Luke 8, once played an all-important role in the healing of a woman with a hemorrhage which she had failed to staunch over twelve long years.⁷⁸

And I note that Luke, in that passage, intertwines his casebook account of this poor woman's healing with that of the raising of Jairus' daughter ... drawing attention, on the one hand, to a man who would gladly have given all he had to hold on to something he had enjoyed for twelve years – namely, his only daughter – and, on the other hand, to a woman who had already spent all she had in a vain attempt to rid herself of something she had endured for twelve years.⁷⁹

But it is most unlikely that soldier number two had ever heard of how a woman from far-off Capernaum had once been healed by touching the edge of the cloak-like garment which he carried away that day.

The third soldier took away with him our Lord's head-gear, which may well have still exuded the sweet fragrance of the expensive nard with which Mary of Bethany had anointed His head, together with his feet, only a matter of days before⁸⁰ – the fragrance of which had filled the whole house at the time.⁸¹

I understand that it is by no means impossible that the 'pure nard' which Mary expended on our Lord had itself come from the pastureland of a much higher mountain than that on which our Lord had been transfigured – namely one in the Himalayas.⁸²

But of the reason for any lingering sweet fragrance soldier number three, of course, knew nothing.

The fourth soldier took our Lord's girdle or belt, little suspecting that the Man on the central cross would soon wear, in the symbolic language of Revelation chapter 1, a girdle of gold round His breast.⁸³ The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that Israel's priests each had a girdle (a sash) 'girded to the breast a little above the elbows'.⁸⁴ He assures us also that the girdle (the sash) of the High Priest was distinguished from those of the ordinary priests by 'a mixture of gold interwoven'.⁸⁵ But then – if we are Christians – we have, not just a High Priest, but a *Great High Priest*⁸⁶ – the whole of whose girdle is gold!

But to such matters, soldier number four was, of course, oblivious.

And then, finally, in all likelihood by the toss of the same knuckle-bone dice, one of the four won himself the star prize, and, together with his other item, took away with him our Lord's inner tunic.⁸⁷ In that this was both woven and seamless, it resembled that of Israel's High Priest, but, unlike the garment worn by the then High Priest, Caiaphas – and which, during our Lord's so-called trial, in blatant disobedience to the Law of God, he (Caiaphas) had rent – our Lord's tunic had never been torn!⁸⁸

Then there were His companions – and the two men of immense moral and spiritual stature with Him on the mount would then be replaced by two malefactors, two robbers – 'they crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst'.⁸⁹ The evening before, He had forewarned them, 'I say to you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, "And He was numbered with the transgressors"⁹⁰ – and *this* was the fulfilment of Isaiah's words.⁹¹

It seems clear that Barabbas was one of the popular Jewish freedom fighters whom the Romans had imprisoned for participating in an uprising – an insurrection – against Rome.⁹² And it may well be that the two who were crucified with Jesus were co-rebels with Barabbas. Certainly, their crucifixion indicates they were judged guilty of more than robbery. In many ways it is ironic that Jesus was crucified between two men, and in place of a third, who represented the very kind of Messiahship which Jesus had all along refused,⁹³ yet of which He had been accused,⁹⁴ and for which He was now crucified.⁹⁵

And finally, The cloud – the bright cloud – which, on the mount, enveloped Him during the night season would then give place to a supernatural – an uncanny – darkness which enveloped Him during the day season – through the early hours of the afternoon – when 'from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land'.⁹⁶ And that well-known and much-loved voice of the Magnificent Glory which here spoke out of the cloud would then be silent – awfully silent – offering no response to His agonised cry, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'⁹⁷

What a thought for us this morning – that it was the very same love which had once brought Him down from heaven which now brought Him down from the mountain, and took Him forward to the cross – when the One now so gloriously *transfigured* would then be so brutally *disfigured* – and all for me!

I close by quoting a verse of a hymn which we sometimes sing in my home assembly back in Cardiff, UK ...

In *His* spotless soul's distress,
I perceive *my* guiltiness;
Oh how vile my low estate,
Since my ransom was so great!⁹⁸

God willing, we shall be looking at a little of what God's word says about that 'guiltiness' next Lord's Day morning.

Footnotes

¹ Matt. 17. 1-8.

² Matt. 26. 65-67.

³ Matt. 27. 45-46.

⁴ With Caesarea Philippi at its base, Mount Hermon is likely the “high mountain” on which Jesus experienced His Transfiguration (Matthew 16:13; 17:1).

⁵ Luke 9.28-29.

⁶ Exodus 34. 29.

⁷ Matt. 3. 4.

⁸ Matt. 23. 5.

⁹ Mark 9. 3.

¹⁰ Matt. 16. 13; 17. 1. ‘Caesarea Philippi was on the south-western slope of Mount Hermon’ ...

<http://www.padfield.com/1996/caesphil.html>. Hermon was 16 kilometres north of CP.

¹¹ <http://www.bibleplaces.com/mthermon.htm> ; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Hermon#cite_note-4

¹² Luke 9. 29.

¹³ Εξαστραπτων, Luke 9. 29; αστραπτουσα, Luke 17. 24.

¹⁴ Moses twice, Deu_9:9 When I went up the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the Lord made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water ... Deu_9:18 Then I lay prostrate before the Lord as before, forty days and forty nights. ... 1Ki_19:8 And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God ... Mat_4:2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry.

¹⁵ Matt. 1. 1.

¹⁶ Exod. 14. 16.

¹⁷ 2 Kings 2. 8.

¹⁸ Matt. 8. 26.

¹⁹ Exod. 19. 8.

²⁰ 1 Kings 18. 39.

²¹ Luke 22. 20.

²² Heb. 10. 15-16.

²³ Cf. ‘the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant ... I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts’, Jer. 31. 31-33.

²⁴ Num. 11. 14.

²⁵ 1 Kings 19. 4.

²⁶ John 19. 30.

²⁷ Mal. 4. 4-5.

²⁸ Luke 16. 16.

²⁹ Heb. 1. 1-2.

³⁰ From Exod. 4. 22 to Zech. 8. 23. Apart from the many ‘says the Lord’, as, e.g., in Mal. 1. 2.

³¹ 52 in KJV, including Matt. 25. 40, 45.

³² Matt. 5. 38-39.

³³ Matt. 17. 5.

³⁴ Mark 9. 5-6.

³⁵ Luke 9. 33.

³⁶ It is as if the ultimate identity of the eternal Son is allowed to peep through; the three disciples become “eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). It is hard not to see here also a foretaste of the glory of the exalted Son, 2 Pet. 1. But Peter misunderstands. He rightly recognizes that it is an enormous privilege to be present on this occasion: “Lord,” he says, “it is good for us to be here” (17:4). Then he puts his foot in his mouth: “If you wish, I will put up three shelters — one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” He entirely misunderstands the significance of the presence of Moses and Elijah. He thinks that Jesus is being elevated to their great stature. Mark 9. 6. “When the screen of your mind goes blank, don’t forget to turn off the sound’.

³⁷ Mark 9. 6. “When the screen of your mind goes blank, don’t forget to turn off the sound’. See Prov. 17. 28.

³⁸ Matt. 3. 17.

³⁹ Psa. 2. 7.

⁴⁰ Isa. 42. 1.

⁴¹ Matt. 3. 6, 11.

⁴² Deut. 18. 15.

⁴³ Matt. 17. 8; ‘No-one except Jesus Himself only’, literally

⁴⁴ 2 Pet. 1.16-17.

⁴⁵ Luke 9.34.

⁴⁶ Luke 9.28-29.

⁴⁷ Luke 6.12.

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- ⁴⁸ Luke 9. 32.
- ⁴⁹ Luke 9. 37 (see J.N.D.).
- ⁵⁰ 2 Pet. 1.18.
- ⁵¹ Luke 9. 32-33.
- ⁵² Acts 1. 9.
- ⁵³ Peter was not only an eyewitness of His majesty, 2 Pet. 1. 16, but a witness of His sufferings, 1 Pet. 5. 1.
- ⁵⁴ Probably not 'top' of Hermon. See D A Carson in Expositor's Bible Commentary.
- ⁵⁵ Luke 9. 43.
- ⁵⁶ 2 Pet. 1. 16.
- ⁵⁷ 2 Pet. 1. 17.
- ⁵⁸ Mark 14. 65.
- ⁵⁹ The imperfect tense of the verb.
- ⁶⁰ Matt. 27. 30.
- ⁶¹ Isa. 52. 14.
- ⁶² Matt. 27.35.
- ⁶³ John 19. 17.
- ⁶⁴ Matt. 6. 28-29.
- ⁶⁵ John 19. 25.
- ⁶⁶ John 19. 23.
- ⁶⁷ Acts 12. 4.
- ⁶⁸ In marked contrast to the four women who 'stood by the cross of Jesus' – 'beholding', 'looking on', as Mark tells us, Mark 15. 40 – we read of the four men who, as Matthew tells us, 'sat down and kept watch over Him there', Matt. 27. 36 ... presumably to prevent anyone from attempting to rescue Him.
- ⁶⁹ This was, indeed, the second occasion that the soldiers had removed our Lord's own clothes from Him; cf. Matt. 27. 28.
- ⁷⁰ John 13. 4.
- ⁷¹ 'When they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take', Mark 15. 24.
- ⁷² See, for example, A. Edersheim, *ibid.*, page 592. Also Thomas Constable on John 19. 23-24.
- ⁷³ A. Edersheim, *ibid.*, page 592.
- ⁷⁴ 'I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist', Luke 7.28. 'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry', Matt. 3. 11; 'One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose', Luke 3. 16.
- ⁷⁵ John 11. 32.
- ⁷⁶ Matt. 28. 9 with Matt. 27. 55-56..
- ⁷⁷ See D. A. Carson on Matt. 9. 20-21.
- ⁷⁸ Luke 8. 44; Matt. 9. 20; cf. Num. 15. 38; Matt. 23. 5, and, for separate reasons, Luke 6. 19.
- ⁷⁹ Luke 8. 42-43.
- ⁸⁰ In a passage applied in the New Testament to our Lord Jesus (Psa. 45. 6-7 with Heb. 1. 8-9), Psalm 45 speaks metaphorically of the garments of our Lord Jesus as 'fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia', Psa. 45. 8. See J. Flanigan, 'Psalms', page 205.
- ⁸¹ Matt. 26. 7; Mark 14. 3; John 12. 3.
- ⁸² See the IVP New Testament Commentary on John 12. 3. Also, 'the essence of this ointment was derived from pure nard, which is an aromatic herb grown in the high pasture-land of the Himalayas between Tibet and India', W. Hendriksen on John 12. 3.
- ⁸³ Rev. 1. 13. John informs us in his gospel that he was known personally to the High Priest – and that, as such, he had access to the High Priest's palace (or court) – to which he was also able to secure access for Peter, John 18. 15-16. I assume therefore that John was familiar with the High Priest's garments as described by Josephus – and it is at least possible that John may have interpreted both the Saviour's garment to the foot and the golden sash in terms of His priesthood.
- ⁸⁴ Antiquities Book III, Chapter VII, paragraph 2. High girding was an indication of high status; see the Expositors Greek Testament on Rev. 1. 13 : *A long robe reaching to the feet, was an oriental mark of dignity {cf. on i. 7, and Ezek. ix. 2, 11, LXX}, denoting high rank or office such as that of Parthian kings or of the Jewish high priest who wore a purple one. High girding (with a belt ?) was another mark of lofty position, usually reserved for Jewish priests, though the Iranians frequently appealed to their deities as "high-girt" (».«., ready for action = c/>. Yash. xv. 54, 57, "Vaya of the golden girdle, high-up girded, swift moving, as powerful in sovereignty as any absolute sovereign in the world"). The golden buckle was part of the insignia of royalty (i Mace. x. 8, 9, xi. 58).*
- ⁸⁵ Antiquities, Book III, Chapter VII, paragraph 4.
- ⁸⁶ Heb. 4. 16.
- ⁸⁷ John 19. 24.
- ⁸⁸ See Matt. 26. 65 and John 19. 24; cf. Exod. 28. 32; Lev. 21. 10.
- ⁸⁹ John 19. 18.

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- ⁹⁰ Luke 22. 37.
⁹¹ Isa. 53. 12; cf. Mark 15.27-28 KJV.
⁹² Mark 15. 7.
⁹³ John 6. 15.
⁹⁴ Luke 23. 2.
⁹⁵ Luke 23. 38.
⁹⁶ Matt. 27. 45.
⁹⁷ Matt. 27. 46.
⁹⁸ From 'O my Saviour, crucified', by R C Chapman.