

## **“If I were preaching from this text . . .”**

*An Ashes to Fire* Preaching Resource

by Bob Broadbooks

### ***Ashes to Fire – Sunday 13***

June 5, 2011 – Easter 7 (Ascension Sunday)

John 17:1-11

### **GLORY DAYS**

Recently the ancient city of Jericho celebrated its 10,000 year birthday. Of course none of the Palestinians living in this city in the West Bank know the exact date of the birthday but they thought that 10-10-10 had a nice ring so they selected it. They had big plans including half a million visitors, international dignitaries, a huge fireworks and laser show. They built two new hotels and opened some restaurants. But the folks were disappointed because no one showed up. Edmund Sanders reported in the Los Angeles Times that a single balloon wafted across the city square where a local band performed on a portable stage. He said, “When October 10 rolled around, the party fell flatter than the city’s walls once did.”

Centuries earlier, God’s glory was evident there in a powerful way when Joshua and his people marched around the city’s magnificent walls seven times. After blowing the trumpet, the collapse was catastrophic (Joshua 6). But today, just outside the present city of Jericho there are just a few dirt mounds where the ancient walls supposedly stood. The glory days are gone.

We would thrill to find the desert bush that God emblazoned for Moses. Moses heard God speak there. It must have been glory as he heard God say that he should take his shoes off for it was holy ground (Ex. 3:1-6). These kinds of Biblical events are often referred to as the “Shekinah” glory of God. That is, there was a visible manifestation of God’s presence. The word shekinah is based on a Hebrew word meaning “to tabernacle or dwell.”

The shekinah glory of God gave guidance and assurance to the children of Israel as they wandered through the wilderness for 40 years (Ex. 13:20-21). The presence of God became visible in the form of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night. God’s glory covered the Tent of Meeting to such a degree that Moses couldn’t even enter it at times (Ex. 40:34-38). The glory of God rested on the Ark of the Covenant. It was a chest about the size of a hope chest that was covered in gold. Inside were the Ten Commandment tablets, Aaron’s rod that budded, and a container of manna. Above were two golden angels looking down on the mercy seat where the high priest would shed the blood of the sacrifices. Right above this was the glow or shekinah presence of God. It was a brilliant light. This ark was transferred to Solomon’s Temple when it was finally built in Jerusalem and the glory hovered over that building just as it had done over the Tent of Meeting (I Kings 8).

But those glory days are gone now. We cannot find the desert bush, the cloud of fire, the Ark of the Covenant, or the Tent of Meeting. The glory days are gone. But are they really gone? Does that mean that we cannot find the glory of God? No, it can’t mean that because God has promised to always dwell with us. In the first pages of the

Bible, He said, "I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God and you will be my people" (Lev. 26:11-12).

No the glory is not gone! Shekinah glory is the visible manifestation of God's presence and God has always planned to get himself to you. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament shekinah glory. Remember, it means to tabernacle or dwell. John 1:14 reads, "The Word (Jesus Christ) became flesh and made his dwelling among us; We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." The writer of Hebrews proclaims, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Heb. 1:3).

For three years, the shekinah glory of God walked among us in the person of Jesus Christ. His brilliant life was ablaze with the power and presence of God the Father. But those glory days are gone now. Jesus fulfilled His task. He took on the "glory" of the cross. He gave His life as a sacrifice for many providing eternal life for all who would believe in Him (Jn 17:2-3). And in our passage today, He is preparing to return to His Father. Glory is on His mind. You are on His mind. Just before He will be caught up in another cloud of glory during His Ascension, He is praying.

He says, "Father the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you" (Jn. 17:1). He continues, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began" (Jn. 17:4-5). He is saying, "I am done here Father. Bring me back home to the glory that you and I have enjoyed since before time began."

Thank God He didn't forget you in that prayer. He prayed for His disciples both then and now. He said, "Glory has come to me through them" (John 17:10b) so He asked God to protect them. Then in verse 22, He says, "I have given them the glory that you gave me that they may be one as we are one."

Jesus says he has passed on the glory to the disciples. The glory days would continue! He would send His Spirit to be with us. Acts 2 speaks of tongues of holy fire resting on each of the 120 who gathered in the upper room. The glory of the Lord was personalized. We would become the temple of the Holy Spirit. Paul says, "For we are the temple of the living God; As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them and I will be their God, and they will be my people'" (II Cor. 6:16). He is "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Can you grasp what Jesus is saying? The shekinah glory of God would have opportunity to manifest itself in you!

In one sense the glory days are gone and thank God they are. We don't have to go back to a bush or a building to be in the presence of God. We don't even have to go back to the "Glory Barn" of Phineas Bresee. For in the High Priestly Prayer of John 17, Jesus made provision for you and me. He said he had given US the glory of His presence. Rejoice!

Rejoice but also be vigilant about your walk with Christ. Just as the glory has moved on to more hospitable surroundings throughout history, His presence can also move from you. The question is sobering but yet so necessary. Is the Holy Spirit alive in you? Is the fire still burning on the altar of your heart? Find a place of prayer. Ask the Spirit to flood your soul with fresh glory. Tarry until He does! God can make these days the true glory days of your life!